



## Conversation on Marketing and Recruiting UAA Trainees Edited Transcript of October 26, 2021 Zoom call

We will start with three really great speakers this morning, each of whom has run a successful UAA. They will address:

- How did they attract students?
- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- What would they like to have tried

Then there will be an opportunity to ask questions.

<Ivan Rosenberg> Good morning everyone. I want to thank you for both being here this morning and being part of the Uniquely Abled Project. This is a huge milestone getting everyone together and exchanging information and asking questions about the UAA program.

The first speaker will be Mike Bastine, calling in from Santa Clarita, CA, area.

<Mike Bastine> I'm the regional director for advanced manufacturing. We started the second Uniquely Abled Academy, hosted by College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita. I'm also on the Uniquely Abled Project Board of Directors, and I'm happy to be here.

<Ivan Rosenberg> Mike, the questions are what worked in terms of attracting and recruiting students into the UAA. Where did you find them? How did you get them interested, et cetera, et cetera.

<Mike Bastine> OK, thank you Ivan.

What worked for us was an intensive robust recruiting and it took much longer than we had initially anticipated, but we wanted to get it right the first time, at least in the pilot program.

We did the social media. And we approached the various organizations that deal with autism and let them know - community service organizations, the library, You name it and we got the word out that we were starting this program.

And then we had orientations. We wanted to make sure everyone, employers, families, and community service organizations understood the program and what our goals were - of getting high functioning individuals gainfully employed. And the term is "gainfully" - that's kind of the key term.

After recruiting - I'm talking maybe three to four months - we had a body of individuals, candidates, that we thought may qualify for the program.



What we did next was testing using ACT Work Keys to measure their verbal math and other skills, just to make sure that they could comprehend the program - the technical aspects of it, the blueprint reading, the measurements, things like that. And in this process of testing we had practice websites links where they could practice the test. They understood, they knew what the program, what the testing was going to be about, and they could practice as much as they want. Then they could take the test if they didn't score high enough, then they could test again.

We just wanted to make sure we could have a measurement of what their skill level was.

I want to comment about the recruiting. Typically when we had neurotypicals, this was training for CNC programming or CNC operation, the manufacturing machine, we would have orientations and we would have maybe 20-25 individuals want to get more information about the program and we'd have 20 to 25 people show up for the orientation.

With uniquely abled program having an orientation, we had 20 people sign up and maybe 60 people showed up at the orientation because it was a family matter. It was with brothers and sisters, parents, aunts and uncles. I mean this was a big deal. That was the first indication that we were on to something big.

So we had the orientations. Prior to the orientation we had partnered with the government and community service organizations so they could be at the orientation because we didn't want any of the funding burden on the families. We wanted to have this completely funded by other means.

In California, we have the Department of Rehabilitation, and we found out they're looking for programs, successful programs, to get people in viable employment and independent. So they became a huge partner for us.

After this long recruitment - I think we had four or five orientations - we had a core group of people to start the UAA program.

We made sure during the orientation that we - being full disclosure, that was kind of our policy - that we wanted to have them see, smell, hear the environment that they were going to be trained in and that they would ultimately work in. You got the glasses. You've got the standing. You got the sounds, the smells. That was part of the orientation.

And I kind olumped this whole thing under recruitment because I want to just stress it takes a longer time than you may think to getting a qualified pool.

And then the other key aspect of this was having employers being aware of this right from the beginning and having them involved. What we found out was people on the spectrum are there in all walks of life. We had we had CEO's. We



had owners of businesses, manufacturers who had family members on the spectrum, who had brothers and sisters and people they knew. It was amazing how many people were in support of the program and how many people were involved already in working with folks on the spectrum. We got employers involved right away and it wasn't too hard to convince them that this was a business decision to have these individuals be on their workforce just because of their unique work ethic capabilities of wanting to be there on time, wanting to do things exactly right, having a positive attitude. These were all things that employers were looking for.

So it wasn't gratuitous by any means. It was employers looking at the students as a viable business option for them, to getting a good workforce, a strong workforce they could count on.

So with employers involved, employers visiting, employers talking about the curriculum, and the aspects they need - the training plus the soft skills that we call employability skills - we had a good program started and it was 13 weeks. It was integrated with not only the technical aspects of blueprint reading, using micrometers, things like this. Safety obviously was the number one topic discussed and talked about. We also had integrated into the technical skills the soft skills portion. Every Friday we would talk about interviewing aspects and time management and communication, mock interviews. All these things are on Fridays and then we go back to the technical skills during the week.

Also, as part of our training package we wanted to emulate employment and how it's going to be. We had day long training like it would be from 8 to 4 (various academies have different times). We had scheduled breaks, scheduled lunch breaks, things like that. They would come there we would go through the training.

To augment their classroom training, in front of an instructor, we had Tooling U, an online resource. They could do it on their own at their own pace. And these were online training modules that would correlate to the training that was taking place with instructor in front of the class. This augmented whatever topic that was being discussed that was being trained at that point in time.

We had some training for the instructors themselves. These were seasoned veterans. They had over 50 years of technical skills of working in CNC machining and they had a lot of skill and training people. They had been trainers for years. But for this aspect of training folks on the spectrum, we provided additional training to understand how to communicate better and to make sure that we could transfer the knowledge in an appropriate way, to get the lessons across and that would prove beneficial as well.

I think that's kind of the biggest things - employer involvement, recruiting, being long and intensive, and then having Tooling U be a part of the program and helping the students.



From the very beginning we had plans for a job fair at the end of the training and along with a graduation. We had a focused job fair that we called speed dating where we had all the employers come in. From the very beginning the trainees knew we were going to have a graduation and a job fair as part of the package. I tell people the training was the 50 yard line. Getting placed in a job was the touchdown. So we had a whole day of interviews. The employers came to the school and they had designated offices. The graduates went to each of the different employers and was interviewed. They had their package of blueprints that they knew how to read. They knew how to hold the calipers and measure using micrometers. They had parts that they had already manufactured. They had their NIMS certification, an industry recognized credentials. They were ready. They had their mock interviews behind them. They knew the questions that were going to be asked about them and they were ready. A lot of the individuals had multiple offers after the end of this speed dating focused job fair.

Even though they had multiple offers, it takes time to get them engaged and get them employed, get them placed. It would take a month, two months, sometimes three months to make sure that they were actually in the position and they'd gone through all the paperwork.

Are there any questions or comments?

<Ivan> I want to follow up on one topic - the job fair. If you know anything about autism, the worst thing that you can tell a person with autism to do is to have 10 interviews every 15 minutes, one right after another. I mean that is scary beyond belief. Their issue in general is social interaction and every one of us recommended to Mike that this job fair would not work and he should not try it. And he said, I think with proper preparation they can do it and he was absolutely right. In the job preparation readiness training they did mock interviews. They even came one night dressed as they were going to in the interviews. They practiced going from room to room. They practiced handing stuff out. They practiced the kind of questions that they were likely to get, e.g., what is one of the things you've done most proud of, what are you not proud of. Those kind of questions. In the College of the Canyons video you'll see one of the students saying "Yes. I was nervous, but I was very well prepared." What I learned from that is these kids can do just about anything if they're well prepared.

I also wanted to note that there's a recording of one of the College of the Canyons open houses on the UAP website, available if you go to About UAAs on the drop-down menu under the Resources tab. It's just an audio recording, but it'll give you an idea of what one of the early open houses was like.

One of the big deals in talking to anybody - employers and students - is that in the UAAs there is an almost 100% placement rate in career jobs. You can lead with that when you're talking to people interested in the program.



If another vocational training program gets 30% job placement, they're happy. We're not. We go for and get 100%.

The last thing is probably to accept a few more than your target cohort, maybe two or three more, because some of them will drop out before you start. However, my understanding is that UAAs have a 100% graduation rate. Everyone who starts the program finishes the program.

Also, we are developing 3 resources funded by Mitsubishi. One is a training video for instructors. One is a soft skills curriculum. These all have videos. The third one is a coaching for the managers of UAA graduates.

<Kathy> You said that sometimes It took one to three months to get the person in the job. Can you describe to me some of the issues that they had that you were able to help them with?

<Mike> There wasn't really issues that they had, it was it was the bureaucracy of the company, of the employer. They would have an opening and then they would still want to have other interviews. They would want to do testing. It just seemed like it took longer than we thought it was going to take to get them employed.

There were some isolated incidences where we had one of our community service partners, Jay Nolan Community Services, perform as a job coach to ensure that there was a smooth transition to employment. But that length of time wasn't unique to the uniquely abled. The same thing happened with our neurotypical CNC machining class. They would graduate and be interviewed, and people say, OK, we want to hire you and OK, let's do it and it would just seem like it took a lot longer than necessary. I don't know if it was an HR thing or what. Maybe John Wheeler can talk a little bit about his experience. It seemed like it always took longer than it should.

<Tracy> I have two questions and thank you for all the information. It really is great information.

You said you're using the ACT Work Keys for pretesting before the students come in. Do you have a cut off score or cut off level that you using for it?

<Mike> Yes. It's based on the Work Keys recommendation. I think it was a level 4. They had to have a four or higher.

<Tracy> I'm familiar with the testing. That's why I'm asking. It's a good indicator.

I have another question which is how did you train your instructors to work with the uniquely abled students?



<Mike> Well, since our Uniquely Abled Academy was kind of early in the process we had different organizations, community organizations, come in, and talk to talk to our instructors. They gave them examples of what to expect and how things are likely to be interpreted by the trainees. It wasn't as structured as Ivan has now, having a video and a set curriculum and things like that. But people who worked with the autistic community came in, and they shared their perspectives to give our instructors a heads up as to what to expect.

<Ivan> I'd summarize that it's not teaching. They know how to teach CNC. But people with autism, and I'm speaking statistically, are much more black and white. You can't get away with idioms and things like that.

As an industrial example, if a manager says, "Make sure your machine is clean at the end of the day", they don't know what that means. So we recommend the manager (and an instructor) make up a list of black on white, objective clear items, and you say this is what I mean: no chips in the machine, no chips on the floor, no oil on the machine, all the tools put away. It's a checklist literally written down. Then you make sure they understand every step on the list. So when I say make sure your machine is clean, that's what I mean.

<Question> Do you have documented work processes or do you have all this these checklists already documented.?

<Ivan> No, we don't have them documented yet. We're just at the beginning.

<Question>

It's great, that's fantastic. That should be used in regular industry.

<Ivan> Absolutely.

There's an analogy in the instructor world. What's hard to get about autism is it's difficulty locating your yourself in space and time. That doesn't mean anything to most of us because we're so used to doing it. Think of yourself in one of these fun houses on the midway where there's sounds going off, the floor is rocking and lights are flashing and all that kind of stuff all designed to completely overwhelm your senses. That's what it's like for some who have autism. So it's very hard for them to isolate it down to a specific thing.

So you need to help them. It's useful to have a flip chart, on which are listed the topics we're going to cover in the in the curriculum. And then here's today's roadmap on a big flipchart, here's the topics we're going to cover today. Good. Now we're going to cover this topic, and you point to it on the flip-chart. And you say, OK, we're covering that. Then later, "OK, we're done with that.", and you cross it out. Now, here's the next one. The physical list helps them locate themselves like a road map.

Those are typical examples.





<Question>

I then I got to kind of hop in here because I'm between class. Bottom line is when you first started with this we thought you were underneath the regular program rather than a boot camp. But we ended up setting up our regular program for a certificate for a portion of our program.

Here's where an issue lies. We didn't actually do the testing. We went through tons of people apparently to get down to about 7 people. It's taking longer fFor those students to go through part of our program, which I think we kind of anticipated anyway.

If an individual does not make it based on not having tested for mechanical ability with the blueprint breeding, then that that's something that was not done prior to. I highly suggest that you have a backup plan for these students. We are actually running their certificate where our students are going through our regular program stuff through a Milling 1, Milling 2, manual mills. Working their way into the CNC and taking their math, blueprint reading metrology, and intro into CNC. And it's all crammed into one semester. Between the things that we're running into already, some of the issues that we have, we have been teaching some of instructors to go through some of the skills of the uniquely abled.

I agree that when you say to clean up the side of your part, what does the cleanup means, what am I cleaning? How do I clean up? And I will admit to that, because we found that out, at least with one of the students that I had there.

The students are bright but then you've got some that cannot physically, think of how to do the machine part of it. We had one individual. You would teach him something, he goes through it but he couldn't remember what he did the day before.

So this is part of an issue if we're not having that students tested for things like that.

This has got to be in the recruiting because otherwise you're going to bring students in that may not succeed. These are real crucial items. That's important, knowing what you're going to do. We brought the students in, turned on the machines, let them know what's kind of element it was, so that also the parents were with them when we did this. We did have one bow out I think of 8 students.

You should start with a small class, 5-7 students, for your first cohort. I think we have two instructors with the class now.

<Ivan> Generally we recommend a 5 ratio of five to one, five students to one staff (instructor or teaching assistant). For example at Glendale for a class of 15 there was one instructor and two teaching assistants. The reason is because you want the TAs to be watching the class and seeing whose getting lost, who's falling behind because you don't want the instructor have to stop and have to



deal with that one person in the class. So the TAs did it. They'd go over to somebody and ask, what's going on? How can I help you catch up or whatever is needed? The TAs had taken the CNC course so they would help out in the lab as well.

We recommend that your first class be small, you know 5 to 7, so you're not overwhelmed with volume. It depends totally on how many machines you have, but you want to use that first cohort to get all the bugs worked out. Then you can move up to 15 if that's the number of machines you have. We recommend you not go too far over 15 with 20 an absolute maximum if you have that number of machines because it gets too distracting, there's too many people in the class and the students may have a hard time focusing.

And you want to accept a few more than your target cohort since some people may drop out before the classes start.

The other thing that worked well in the open houses and people referred to giving them an experience. Taking them down to the machine shop and letting them push the start button. You have a partially finished part already in there. Maybe it takes a few minutes to actually machine. They push the start button. The machine makes the part, you take it out, and you give it to them and they take it home. I know all they're doing is pushing the machine start button, but it makes a difference.

Any other questions for Mike?

<Question> How did you handle the students that didn't get the four or five in the Work Keys? What are you doing for the students that are at a 3? Are you giving them a booster class? How do you handle the students that don't make the cut off?

<Mike> Yeah, that's a good question because we experienced that. They have practice tests that they can take and they can take it over and over as many times as they wish. They may not make it in time for that cohort, but they can take the testing over and over, and they can take the practice test and they can maybe start the next cohort if they feel they're ready for the tasking.

<Question> So you do allow them multiple times to take the test?

<Mike> Yes.

<Stephanie> I just have a quick question. What is the normal percentage of fall out? So if you get X amount of students, how many students on average fall out of the class?

<Mike> Well, we've had I think maybe one non completer in each class.





<Ivan> If I look at all the UAA's it's almost 0. Even with those classes where the students decided that this wasn't for them, they completed the program.

OK, thank you Mike.

Next up is John Wheeler from Rhodes State in Lima, OH. Well, formally from Rhodes State.

<John>

Formerly, yes and Tammy, who worked with John in establishing and running the UAA, is on the call.

Because I just retired due to the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System, I'm kind of in purgatory for 90 days from Rhodes State, so Tammy, if you have anything to add, feel free to join in.

We started our recruiting process in January for a mid April start.

Like Mike mentioned, we used the media, television, radio, print media, and social media to get the word out. We attempted to contact a lot of the local autism support groups. But we didn't have much luck there. I don't know if a lot of that was related to the pandemic or what the issue was there.

Interesting that everyone says that newspapers are a dying or a dead medium. Most of our response that we got was from the newspaper articles as opposed to the television and radio spots.

<Ivan> And I should say, by the way, there are links on the UAP website to the articles and also to the radio spots.

<John>

We contacted a lot of the local guidance counselors in our local school districts. And I would say doing that again, I would follow up on that a lot heavier because we had one student who was still a senior in high school and would not graduate until the end of May. His parents talked to their guidance counselor and the counselor was so excited about the program that he let him go ahead and enroll before he graduated from high school and finish up his senior year online. So I think that's an asset we need to look at a little bit closer the next time. In fact they were so excited about this that at the end of the school year they called me and asked what the approximate value of the program was because they recognized him at their senior awards assembly and pretty much treated it as a scholarship.

We had several open house events, five or six open house events, in which we showed some videos. They're on the UAP website. One is from the College of the Canyons. And as Ivan mentioned, we took them into the shop so they could get the full experience of the CNC, the sight, the sound, the heat, and all that.



Again, let them push the button to start the machine. We had approximately 15 who attended the open houses.

Our target cohort was five. Since it was our first group, we didn't want to go overwhelming ourselves so we limited it to five. We also had them take the Work Keys assessments.

We did instructor training. Angie, our soft skills instructor, had a lot of experience in training people on how to interface with autistic individuals. She's actually given classes to 1st responders so that they're able to deal with people on the spectrum. We also had a 90 minute training that all staff attended with kind of the background of the whole spectrum and how to deal. One of our instructors actually was a machining instructor who had had experience working with autistic individuals, so that was that was a good experience.

We had a CNC instructor and a manual machining instructor. During the CNC portion, we had an intern who was there. And then the CNC instructor would stay in the afternoon during the manual machining portion of the class so if someone was having problems we could give them a little extra attention without holding up the entire class.

Once we selected our cohort, we had an orientation. We had them sign an agreement with us that was just some basic things, which was probably like if you were employed. For example:

- I will be here on time everyday. I for some reason I can't make it, I will call by a certain time.
- I will practice the proper safety instructions.
- And not be disruptive.

Just so that they understood what we were expecting and we knew that they understood what was going on.

Safety was a very important part of our class. The first 2 1/2 weeks they all received training and received their OSHA 10 hour card.

One of the grants we received required them to sit for an exam for an industry recognized certification. They sat for the NIMS safety and measurement exam and took that one. Of the five, one of the students did receive that certification.

We tried to emulate a job like Mike mentioned. We went from 8:00 to 4:00 every day with a break in the morning, in the afternoon, and 30 minutes for lunch. We tried to make it as close to a job situation as possible.

Of the 12 to 15 we had in our open houses again we selected 5. One of the people that came to orientation said he after he saw it, he just didn't want to be a machinist. Which is fine. Couple others after they did the online test exams for Work Keys decided that they were still interested in the program, but they wanted



to spend a little extra time working on the practice tests and boning up on their math and graphic skills before they set for the exam.

Because of the pandemic our face-to-face interviews we had to do via zoom. If I were to do it again, I would make sure we did them in person. But that was just the time and the situation we were dealing with.

We also used Tooling U as a supplement to the instruction. It's a very good program. The Tooling U modules will not let you move ahead until you've successfully completed that module. So it's a very good tool.

<Ivan>

We have mentioned the program coordinator, which we won't get it too much here. One of the things that program coordinator typically does is check each student's progress on Tooling U and if they see they're falling behind the program coordinator can get in with them and ask if they're having a problem.

At College of the canyons, that was pretty heavily used by the program.

If you're an administrator for Tooling U you can log into their website and it will show you each student and the progress that they're making or not making so you can follow up on that.

As the class started up, we got more and more industry involved. We had some companies come and visit class.

One of our television spots was posted on the college's Facebook page, which someone at the Ohio Department of Higher Education intercepted. As a result of that Ohio's Lieutenant Governor came and paid a visit to our program early on.

As a result of that, we had a local company that invited the entire class down for a day for a tour. Have some mock interviews and I would recommend as many face to face company visits as possible or have them come to class and speak on a subject. I think that's very important.

You need to emphasize, and Ivan has mentioned this many, many, many times, when you talk to potential employers they need to understand this is a business decision, not a charity decision.

These young men, our cohort, all five completed the cohort. One of them decided he didn't want to go forward in a machining career, which was his choice. Of the other four the last update I had, three of them had jobs. The 4th one has had multiple interviews and, as Mike said, everybody kind of works on their own time schedule. The starting salary for one of them was \$19.00 an hour.



Our students all work with what we refer to as OOD, which is Opportunities for Ohioans with disabilities. They're serving as their job coaches and also working with them to find a meaningful job.

One of the things we did once we completed the cohort and after we had a graduation ceremony, we sat down with everybody who had been involved in the program and had a debriefing session to get some ideas as to what worked, what didn't work, what we should do differently, maybe something we shouldn't even do at all the next time and things like that. This gave us a lot of good feedback.

I've said this before, it sounds corny, but it's true. In my 40 plus years in industry and education this has been the most meaningful program I have ever been involved in. If you see the difference in these students from the time they start the program until the time they finish the program it is just amazing. We had a couple of them that if you spoke to him he almost fainted when the class started. At the end of the class, the entire cohort had bonded, they were good friends, they had been through this program together. In addition to finding them jobs it was just gratifying to see how they developed throughout the program.

So I'll be glad to answer any questions.

<Mike> John, can you talk a little bit about transportation because that was one aspect of recruitment we had to consider.

<John> Lima has a population of 40,000 and the surrounding area is pretty much all rural. So transportation was an issue here.

We do have a local bus service. One student did not drive at all. Actually two of them didn't. But two of the students were cousins and they rode together. The other one came on the bus, but it was a rather lengthy commute, I think of almost an hour on the bus. So that is another thing that that you kind of need to look at. Two of our students came from almost 40 miles away to attend class. Transportation, depending on your locale, could be an issue.

<Ivan> We generally suggest that you look at your geographic coverage as being no more than one hour transportation time from the host school. One of my to-do's is to check with Uber and Lyft because they used to have a free program for taking people to a training facility and also to their first job for X months. I will find out more about that.

In many places there's free, local, public, transportation programs for the uniquely abled. In Los Angeles it's called Access that these kids can apply for.

<John> And interesting, even though our program started in April and ended in July I am still getting occasional phone calls from people wanting to know about the program and when we're going to start another cohort. And so the word is still out there, and word of mouth is worth something too.



<Ivan> There's nothing like a successful program to generate interest.

<Attendee> Yes, I want to add to that. When you have employers that have these students and they talk about it between your other cohorts, it's also going to build the program as well.

<Ivan> There's no more than one or two degrees of separation between everybody and somebody that has a diagnosis. You'll be stunned at how many people know someone with a diagnosis. I'm a parent of two kids on the spectrum. The biggest concern parents like me have is how are these kids going to support themselves when I'm no longer here. And there is not much out there. So when they hear something like this, parents can be your best communication resource, the informal network.

OK, any other questions for John? Thank you, John

Trisha, you're up.

<Trisha>  
Thank you, Ivan. I took it literally when you said presentation, so I actually did a PowerPoint. I'm going to share it with everyone if everyone can give me a thumbs up when you see the screen.

In alignment with what everyone else said, what we did first was to look at what we were going to offer. We met with our program CNC Advisory Committee that is for the college. We asked them, based on the need of the community, would milling or lathe be the direction we should go. The committee said milling was the higher need, so we started focusing what we were developing with their feedback.

We also talked about, should we run it as a boot camp? Should we run it as a certificate? They really wanted to have it as an embedded certificate that could be within our technical diplomas.

So Dale and his team got busy working and we came up with nine classes, a total of 16 credits. It went up to the state for state approval, and the state approved the CNC setup and operations certificate for the program. It's a total of 512 contact or instructional hours. Similar to what John and Mike said, we wanted it to align with what a typical work day was.

So based on lab availability we have the class running from 9 to 5. And from 4:00 to 5:00 every day we have it built in that there is actually no class. It allows for additional tutoring. It allows for employability skills, workshops, financial planning workshops, presentations by employers. So we built that in throughout the whole semester.



<Ivan> Is that how your soft skills is built in?

<Trisha> In the soft skills we're utilizing the book *Come to Life*, the workbook to help build that self advocacy. And we're also going to be bringing in the book *Hidden Curriculum* which would really help with transitioning into the workplace, So we're utilizing that time frame to give those soft skills, those employability skills, to enhance it.

And of course it's built in the classes already. We have a lot of soft skills, critical thinking, teamwork and so forth. But we wanted specific time to address those skill sets.

The program was slotted to run from August to December, a typical semester at our college. But what we noticed, as Dale alluded to, is we didn't build in, because these are college level classes regulated by HLC, we didn't add in that extra time in the lab to allow the students to get more time on the machines to do projects. So we met with the instructors, we met with the students, and they agreed that if we extend it two weeks into January that would allow them to stay on point when it comes to doing the different programs. So we are extending it into January for doing those hands-on activities.

When it comes to marketing I created a Gantt chart and then I met with our marketing department. I knew that once we had established what the program was going to look like, then I could go to them to develop a web page, a landing page. Right now it's not as robust as we want it, so I'll be working on that with Kate, our new UAA coordinator, to get that a little bit more robust. And then we also created a UAA flyer, so that way we can start distributing it to all the people that we thought would be a good touch point.

<Ivan> We can provide you that flyer in Word and then you can modify it as you wish.

<Trisha> I can share that with you too.

And then I did a UAA marketing flow chart to make sure that we weren't missing any points. So part of the marketing avenues that we looked at, like I said, we we talked to the advisory committees. We created a press release.

One of the big things is I created a white paper really explaining UAA to the college as a whole. What is the goal of UAA? Who are the students that we're looking for? What is the history of UAA? And then they were able then to develop the press release off of the White Paper I created.

We also had a great article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Fox 6, which is a local television station, did a feature program on the Uniquely Abled Academy at MATC.





We placed an article in our local trades, the Tool Die and Machining Association of Wisconsin. So we did an article in the Surgeons of Steel.

We also did communication features for our students for our students and our employees. We have a weekly communication letter for MATC that goes out in an email format and so that way all our students and our staff knew about UAA.

We also were featured on the public broadcasting system which is housed at our college.

Of course, we utilized social media, so I think everyone is doing it. MATC, Facebook, Twitter, etc. To really get that word out.

The biggest thing is we were shut down when we wanted to do these events. So we were not allowed to have those in person similar to some of the other people that spoke today. So we had to hold virtual events.

So we really focused on having the 1st events being a partnership event. We focused on those high school transition coordinators because every high school has transition coordinators that assist students in transitioning into postsecondary education. So we invited high school transition coordinators, community based organizations and some of our employment focused nonprofits to those partnership events. We told the story of UAA and yes, Mike, I used your wonderful video that that speaks volumes. All somebody has to do is just watch the video and you want to be part of that program right away. So we use that.

Since we didn't have the capability of coming on campus and touring our labs, we created a video. And this was done by me. If you're looking at budget or you're looking at your marketing and you don't have a video team, I got a Blogger set at Best Buy and I hooked it up to my camera and it had a little boom on it. I was going around following Dale and videoing our manual lathes or our manual mills. And then I went over to CNC and Dale just kind of talked about what the machines are. So that way at least the general public that might not be familiar with computer numeric based machine training, they would go, "Oh wait, a second. Now I know what you're talking about. I've seen these machines before,"

We ran those information sessions and then with those information sessions I was able to share flyers and then also give them invites that they could share with individuals they might work with as clients, to students that might be at the high schools, or to other clients that they might be working with if they're looking for jobs that would fit the criteria of our program.

We ran 3 information sessions specifically for recruitment for students. We had one during the day because I wanted to make sure that if we were working with high school students that we were hitting with those transition coordinators that they could make sure that students could come to their office



and they could run those information sessions. And then we ran 2 at night because, of course, we wanted the parents and family members to be involved with those information sessions. And lastly, we hosted 2 employer events. Employers are key, as everyone has been noting, to transition students upon graduation into wonderful employment. And so we hosted 2. They asked to have them in the AM because we did a poll to our employers what was the best time.

And so when we're looking at the selection of students, students started off by doing an interest form. Were they interested in learning more about the program? Then they were invited to the virtual event.

Once they came to the virtual event, some of our guidelines for COVID were lifted, so we were able to bring in small groups individuals to tour the lab. So we made personal individual appointments with each student and their family to tour the lab. Dale gave them the tour, asked them a bunch of questions, a lot of stuff on math which some of it went over my head, but the students all knew it. And then he actually did have them work on some programming on some CNC, so they were comfortable as they got to the CNC machine.

Then after they did the tour, they then went up and met with our Student Accommodations Team because I wanted it that same day so that the program would be fresh in their head. The Student Accommodations Team not only spoke about what accommodations are available at the college, they also re-asked the student, why do you want to go into CNC? Making it sure that it's not the family (parents) that are pushing them into a career path. I see this often with all students that sometimes they get pushed into a career path. We wanted to hear from the students, "Why do you want this career?" They did a very informal interview with the students as they were talking about accommodations.

After they left we invited them back to meet with a career coach and do a career assessment. Our goal was to run the ACT Work Keys. There was a glitch with getting it into the college, so we had to push it back. So this round we did not have Work Keys available. But they met with the career coach to do a career assessment. Then they talked it out once again to make sure that this is a career that they wanted to go into.

Then if everything looked great then we moved him on. Then they filled out an MATC application for UAA. We had a new student orientation the week before which is a full morning orientation where they got to meet the pathways, the Deans, the transition coordinators, everybody that's on the team. They got a tour of where their classes are. They got their student ID's. So we had a whole orientation prior to the start date and then of course the program started.

When we're looking at the demographics, who came into the program? We had seven students. We were close to having eight. The eighth student was in and because it's a full time program, they would have to surrender the job they were



in, so they decided that they wanted to wait and not participate. So we had seven male students that are in the program with the average age of 23. Right now the oldest students are turning 25 this month and we had two students that were coming straight from high school. So they were right in that 18 year old age bracket.

Three had previous college experience and they did very well in college. Still getting high C's and B's on most of their classes they were taking, but it wasn't a career. They were just taking a lot of their general education classes.

How did they learn about it? We are tracking all the detail. Out of the seven, three students that were enrolled came from the newspaper article in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Three came from the Fox 6 TV feature story and one was a member of one of the MATC employees, a family member.

<Ivan> I again say that those radio and TV videos and articles are on the website, so you can go see what they look like

<Trisha>

The biggest thing is we developed a Consultative Team, so it's similar to an advisory committee. But we can't use that technical term, so I had to think of creative way to have another team. So I did a Consultation Team for UAA. It's a cross functional team. So we have employers, we have faculty, we have autism society, we have MATC accommodations, community based organizations, high school transition coordinators. It is one of the most robust and involved teams that I've ever participated in in my 20 plus years working in higher ed.

Wonderful ideas and they're focused on that recruitment. We meet monthly and we run out of time every time we meet because they're coming up with great ideas when it comes to what we could do for those employability skills. How do we get to parents? How do we get to more employers?

We have one of the employers on the committee. He took me out to a manufacturing expo, which I was there participating, and he walked me around introducing me to all these other companies he works with, saying you need to get involved with UAA. It's coming from him. He has a daughter that's on the spectrum and so he is very passionate about being part of this UAA Consultative Team. So it's finding whom you know who can help you so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. But the ideas that were generated from this team are phenomenal.

And then of course we do all the partnership events. We're going to have partner presentations coming in. One of our partners is Harley Davidson. We have Superior Tool & Die. We have Alice Tool, Carson Tool. They're going to be coming in and doing a presentation on their companies. We try to have the big ones like Harley and Superior Die, all the way down to the small job shops such as Alice Tool and Carlson Tool.



So that way students, when they see the presentations, they know also that they're going to go on tour to those manufacturers at the end of the program, because we want to make sure that it's the right fit, because then that's the retention of the students in the program.

Then there's going to be the job fair. We're doing the mock interviews. But all of this is we're getting employer involvement with all this additional training.

Kate Bathie is the new UAA transition coordinator. I'm the one that kind of got it off the ground and launched, and so I'm handing it over to Kate.

What questions can I answer?

<Mike> It wasn't mentioned, but our Uniquely Abled Academy wasn't a credit oriented program. Technically speaking our trainees were just that, they were trainees. They were not students. It was off campus. They didn't have to apply to the college, they didn't have student parking permits. They didn't have student health insurance. It was what we call in California a not for credit based training program. It is a form of contract education. With that we didn't have to go through the academia milestones to get the program up and running.

It made me think of that because Trish did such a good job with the detail oriented aspect of getting it through academia and making sure everyone was on board.

When we did an assessment of the program and talking with employers. Employers, from their perspective only, said we just want people that have the right attitude and are technically competent to do the job. We don't care if they have a college credit or if they got an associate degree. We just want to make sure they have the technical skills. So we leaned towards focusing on industry credentials and competency based training versus having a certificate of completion or any kind of credits with the program.

So that was a huge distinction in our part.

<Ivan> I want to point out that from the perspective of the Uniquely Abled Project, every uniquely abled Academy is unique. We don't come in and say it has to be credit or non credit.

We deliberately set this program up to be scalable. That means every Uniquely Abled Academy is run locally, tuned locally. Our job is to consult and help get it up and running. In fact, myself, John and Mike are the three consultants that come along with the program. You'll get one of us from the very beginning. When you say we're interested, we've got to get going on this, you'll get one of the three of us. Trish and for John, we were in weekly one hour phone calls for zoom calls for a while to get it going.



<Trisha>

There's one thing I want to add, that I forgot, and it goes back to when you're onboarding the student and they're going through that selection and admission process.

I know we talked extensively about Work Keys. We're going to be bringing it on, and I really wanted it on this past time.

But something we discovered. We do have seven students in the program. One of the students we had a transition out of being in the machine labs and it was based on the motor skills, their gross motor skills. They were having trouble remembering, So even though they were being successful in the metrology and the math classes they were having trouble when it came to the machines themselves. They tried so hard. We were labeling things, writing more checklists. We had instructors doing one on one for almost 5 weeks with the student to really help the student because the student wanted it so bad. But the student did not have the cognitive ability when it came to the gross motor skills that are needed for working in a manufacturing environment, around machines. It was a very big safety concern.

So we're going to be adding in not only the Work Keys, but we're going to do a some kind of simple gross motor assessment as part of it too.

It was really hard for the student not to be able to continue on in those labs, but the student understands that he cannot do it on his own even though he's being successful in the other classes and he's still finishing up with the other classes.

So that's something I wanted to share that we're adding that extra component.

<Attendee> I'd like to add to this that when we actually started this up, it wasn't set for not knowing that it's like your boot camps that you guys arrived. So what ended up happening is we ended up doing that as a program, one where we don't get the funding necessarily for the state like you guys do, and some of the other areas for this class. So we're running it actually as a class so they can get financial aid if they need to, because they haven't got the full funding for the program yet. I'm hoping this goes further on, which Trisha is working on.

But right now, as we started it with the program, the students are starting out slower. The one issue that we are having is the blueprint reading for our regular class. They're having issues with that. As far as the machines it's taking longer based on what we do with instruction on it and we are right now it's step by step procedures for the uniquely abled to try to pinpoint what we actually have with it, so everybody kind of understands that.

<Ivan> I know some of you are considering or looking at establishing a UAA I wanted to make you aware that there's a 135 page UAA Replication guide which is available.



We're also as fast as we can writing FAQ documents. There's one on a typical budget. There's one on funding sources. Stuff like that will all be posted on the UAP website under the tab Resources and the drop down menu Resources for UAA. It's passworded, and the password is service. We ask that you put your name and organization in there and the password. It's only for people like you. It's not for the general populace.

One of the questions I have of all of you is was this worth it? And if it was, what topic would you like us to cover in the next call?

<Dale> The only thing that I would say is the testing that you actually utilized for these students for this, that's one thing that I think we need to kind of talk about at the school here.

I said the one thing that would be important is the testing for these individuals. These students didn't get tested. Would probably help them succeed, I think better than what we got. We have across the border with different students, some that are so exceptional it isn't funny. And then we got others. But it is working. Even there's a programming class to be honest with you. I think we're probably the first ones to do a programming if I'm not mistaken. The first group to do it the programming for credit

<Ivan> I think everybody had a little bit of CNC programming in their program.

I also want to make it clear that this program has been free to the students. Every single one, and we're committed to that. There's a lot of different ways of doing it. Maybe it's a personal thing. I've been a parent for kids, now in their early 20s, and I have spent 10s of thousands of dollars on programs that made no difference. I was not going to be one of those programs.

I can see some of you have put your comments and suggestions into the chat. That's great. Uhm, that's a good place to put your comments.

Anything else that anybody wants to say about anything?

I just remembered one other thing.

Our intention is to build the Academy around existing courses so a school does not have to go to a state agency or faculty and get approval for a new class. It's putting together existing classes in a program. We try to minimize the bureaucratic red tape, so we're building it around what a school already has. There are FAQ documents now on what's in it for the Host School and stuff like that. And they'll be posted pretty soon.

<Mike> I think this form is excellent because we interface with people that are on boarding the program and people who have had the program and lessons





learned. I think this forum would just get richer and richer as more and more people come on board and they'll have their stories to share as far as what worked and what didn't work and then just the exchange of information that's going to be that much more valuable for all of us

We are exploring the UAA concept to going into different disciplines like cybersecurity, data entry, things like that. It looks like it would work. So that's something everyone should keep in the back of their mind. Apply it to other disciplines.

<Ivan> Yes.

There are eight schools that have either opened or will have opened a UAA. By next June we expect 15 to be operating and that's just the ones that have committed. We expect probably going to be more than 15. That's how fast this thing is growing.

I've gotten some suggestions on topics which we will go into. So there's going to be a lot more discussed on the next Zoom call.

We have had a request that people be able to get in touch with each other. I know I gave everybody email addresses by virtue of the meeting invite. If you have a specific concern about my sharing your contact information, let me know and then I will not include it in the general information that I'm going to send out to everybody who was invited. I think there were like 48 or 50 people who were invited. A number couldn't make it and said they wanted to hear the recording.

I've been following this in-person meeting issue pretty closely because I'm a consultant and have a professional association. We're starting to look at in-person meetings. It's still uncertain whether it's going to be January, February, March or even later.

Let me know of anybody else that you think would be added to the distribution list. This is very open. The only requirement is it needs to be people that are interested in creating a UAA because that's what it's all about. People that are running one or want to find out more about UAAs.

Thank you is just not an adequate word for how I feel about all of you. You've taken a dream I had and you've turned it into reality far beyond I could have ever imagined. And in the space you've impacted the lives of hundreds and hundreds of people. And so whatever the equivalent of the pearly gates is for you, you got a big, big, big check mark on the difference you've made in the world.

So thank you, thank you. And with that we are complete.