

UCEDD LEADERSHIP: A GUIDE TO THE NEXT GENERATION

The purpose of this guide is to provide a university search committee with an overview of the roles, functions, and expectations for the leadership of a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). A UCEDD is a unique entity funded by the federal government to serve as a bridge between the university and its academic pursuits and the very real and practical needs of children and adults with developmental disabilities in their respective states. The UCEDD should be viewed as major support and a resource to the entire state in working to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities, their families, and those individuals and organizations who work on their behalf. The 67 UCEDDs across the nation work in concert with other partners who make up the Developmental Disabilities Network in the state and operate under the auspices of the Developmental Disabilities Act of 2000 which defines its mission and governs their funding and priorities.

This guide will outline the federal requirements for UCEDDs and UCEDD Directors, as well as best practices gleaned from across the UCEDD network in the process of selecting a new UCEDD Director. The guide is broken into two sections—first an overview of the legal requirements of a UCEDD under the DD Act and related regulations, and second a synopsis of best practices for UCEDD Directors from across our network, along with suggested ideas for search committee consideration. Appendices provide additional information on federal legislation, technical assistance resources available from the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), and Director job descriptions from other UCEDDs of various university administrative homes.



Overview of DD Act and Related Regulations

The **Developmental Disabilities Act** outlines four programs that make up the Developmental Disabilities Network:

- UCEDDs: University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service
- State Councils on Developmental Disabilities, known as DD Councils
- Legal Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights, known as P&As
- Grants for Projects of National Significance in Developmental Disabilities

Together these organizations and funding streams work together to promote access, independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion for people with developmental disabilities.

UCEDDs often work with other state agencies including state departments of education, special education, developmental disability services, health, social services, Medicaid and Medicare, and others, as well as disability advocacy and service organizations.

Requirements of a UCEDD

According to the DD Act, the four core functions of a UCEDD are:

- **Training** of students in multiple disciplines for research an academic instruction as well as direct, clinical, or other support services
- **Community Services** such as training for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD), their families, professionals, and other community members
- **Research**, including basic or applied research, evaluation, and policy analysis
- **Dissemination of information** on evidence-based and promising practices including education of the State Legislature and Members of Congress

According to the DD Act, the UCEDD must also:

- Create and operate under a **5-year data-driven strategic plan**
- Establish a **Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC)** made up of individuals with DD, their families, members of the P&A system and State DD Councils, other state entities, and self-advocacy representatives
- **Leverage public and private funds** using core funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) to seek additional funding and expand impact

Additionally, in any personnel considerations, the DD Act requires that the UCEDD must:

- Ensure senior professional staff **hold appropriate faculty appointments in the university and contribute to the university**
- Ensure faculty and staff represent a **broad range of disciplines** and backgrounds
- Take **affirmative action** to employ individuals with disabilities and those from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds without discrimination

Requirements of a UCEDD Director

Qualifications as defined by ADD:

- A **faculty position** in a relevant department
- Demonstrated **expertise, leadership, and commitment** in the field of developmental disabilities
- **Leadership and vision** in carrying out the mission, core functions, and federal requirements of the UCEDD
- **Experience** managing grants and contracts
- Ability to **leverage** public and private funds
- **Prior approval** by ADD to assume the role of Principal Investigator of the Core UCEDD grant through ADD

Duties expected by ADD:

- Provide leadership in carrying out the mission, core functions, and federal requirements of the UCEDD in compliance with legislation and related regulations
- Maintain collaborative relationships with the State DD Council, the State P&A, and other state agencies, organizations, and community service providers
- Maintain the faculty and staff necessary to support the functions and purposes of the UCEDD and allocate adequate staff time to carry out activities related to the core functions
- Prepare and submit the annual report to ADD
- Oversee participation in National Information Reporting System (NIRS) database and the production of annual reports, 5-year core grant application, and other grant applications
- Prepare and implement the 5-year strategic plan
- Consult with the Consumer Advisory Committee on the strategic plan
- Obtain funding to carry out research and development-related activities
- Work collaboratively across disciplines to develop joint research, training, service, and student opportunities



Far left: Youth art; courtesy of the Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Left: Playing baseball; courtesy of Mike Coonan and the Florida Office on Disability and Health (FODH) Inclusive Image Library

Cover: courtesy of the FODH Inclusive Image Library

How is a UCEDD Different from Other Centers on Campus?

With the intersection of university, federal, and leveraged funds, participation in a national network, and a community service mandate; UCEDDs must be responsive to a number of different funders and stakeholders, including:

- The Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD); the ADD and the UCEDDs are governed by the Developmental Disabilities Act (see Appendix 1).
- The national network of 67 UCEDDs, with at least one Center in every state and territory, connected via the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD), a national office near Washington, DC
- Other public and private funders

UCEDDs also:

- Focus specifically on developmental and other disabilities, while considering issues that affect people with disabilities across the lifespan
- Participate in state-wide DD Network activities and national UCEDD network activities



Left: Waisman Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison; courtesy of the Waisman Center

Above: Center for Disabilities and Development, University of Iowa; courtesy of the Center for Disabilities and Development

Recommendations from the Field

This section outlines ideas and suggested practices collected from current UCEDD Directors concerning the functions, roles, and duties of a UCEDD Director (beyond the legal requirements outlined above), as well as suggestions on search committee participants and methods.

Director

Functions and roles of a UCEDD Director

- Provide UCEDD, University, and regional leadership in developmental disabilities
- Serve as liaison with state and national offices and agencies, including the AUCD and DD Network partners
- Represent the UCEDD externally and within the University
- Oversee management of financial resources (including federal core grant, leveraged funds, and state-level funding), and human resources
- Hold a tenure-track position in relevant department with teaching, research, and service responsibilities
- Lead program development and overall programmatic direction of the UCEDD

Desired qualifications of a UCEDD Director

A UCEDD Director should have:

- Knowledge, experience, and demonstrated leadership in DD issues, policies, and best practices
- A balance of experience in research, education, and service
- Management skills and experience—demonstrated effectiveness in the administration of research, training, outreach, technical assistance, and dissemination efforts
- The ability to leverage funds / grant writing and management experience
- Experience working with policy makers and policy analysis and development
- Direct experience working with people with disabilities and their families
- Demonstrated leadership in DD that supports full inclusion of individuals with disabilities
- Recognition of the importance of technology and new media in reaching all areas of the state
- Knowledge of a range of disciplines and the ability to collaborate across disciplines; UCEDD Directors may also originate from any of a range of fields (medical, legal, social sciences, education, etc.)

Search Committee

Whenever possible, the search committee should represent the broad constituencies of a UCEDD, and should include:

- A Committee Chair that is a tenured faculty or administrator familiar with the UCEDD
- Faculty from other academic departments that will potentially be involved in the UCEDD
- UCEDD staff member(s)
- Member(s) of the Consumer Advisor Committee
- Member(s) of any other advisory committees for the UCEDD
- Representatives from relevant state agencies
- Other membership reflective of the university and larger community

The previous UCEDD director typically is not on the search committee, but he or she should be available to the committee and applicants for consultation

Search methods

While Universities have their own standards and practices, the following enhancements may be considered:

- If the committee wishes to hire a search consultant, find one with experience with UCEDDs or the field of disabilities. Past searches have experienced mixed results from the use of search consultants without disability experience.
- Post positions throughout the AUCD network and other national disability organizations such as American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and others.
- Utilize technical assistance from AUCD, which receives funding from ADD to provide such assistance to UCEDDs. Technical assistance can be individualized to meet the need of the requestor, and may include answering questions, providing resources, facilitating networking with others, and on-site visits. The ADD project officer is also available for questions if necessary (see Appendix 3 for contact information).

For more information and appendices, please visit the Leadership Development page on the UCEDD Resource Center at: www.aucd.org/URCLeadershipDevelopment.

This report was published by the Association of University Centers on Disabilities and funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities through technical assistance contract HHSP23320082917YC.