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ABSTRACT

Designed for community college vocational/technical education teachers and recruiters, this manual recommends several approaches to student recruitment that have proved effective by instructors and recruiters throughout North Carolina. Part I discusses the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) recruitment formula, which offers a step-by-step approach to dealing with initial contacts with prospective students by focusing on their interests and desires and the benefits that completing the program can bring them. Part II recommends that community college instructors work with Industry Education Coordinators (IEC's) at local high schools, making sure that IEC's have up-to-date information about college programs and, through IEC's, working with academic teachers at the high schools to sell the college program. Part III recommends ways that recruiters can become personally involved with high school personnel and keep their programs visible. Part IV focuses on recruiting non-traditional students by visiting workplaces, establishing working relationships with personnel officers, targeting high school equivalency program students, and participating in community events. Concluding comments emphasize the importance of face-to-face communication. Sample recruitment letters are appended.
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Effective Methods Of Recruiting Occupational Students

*In The North Carolina
Community College System*

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Effective Methods Of Recruiting Occupational Students

**In The North Carolina
Community College System**

**By Gene Hemby,
Director of Curriculum Improvement Project
Machine Metalworking**

**Pitt Community College
Greenville, NC
1991**

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The recruitment techniques listed in this manual have been applied at Pitt Community College during 1990 and 1991. These efforts received full support of the Executive Vice President and the Dean of Students. The results have been very successful. In the Fall Quarter of 1990, PCC experienced a 15% increase in traditionally vocational programs' enrollment and 21% increase in technical programs' enrollment.

RECRUITMENT GUIDE

Recruitment is an essential part of any occupational program. Without it, many good programs may wither and die on the vine. In the past, recruitment may have been limited to word-of-mouth or passing out response cards. That may have been all that was necessary. Today, competition among vocational/technical programs is keen. Occupational instructors need to develop a fresh approach that really works! This manual delivers several new ideas, test-proven by various community college instructors and recruiters throughout the state. Input from high school personnel is also included--information from experienced teachers who know what it takes to attract students, some who may be much less motivated than others.

This manual was made possible through a Curriculum Improvement Project directed by Gene Hemby at Pitt Community College. It is his hope that using the ideas presented here will help you organize your recruiting efforts and better utilize your time. Pick and choose the techniques that work best for you and refine your own method. With consistent effort, these ideas will improve your enrollment. They really work!

I. AIDA RECRUITMENT FORMULA

Mr. Sam Parsons, a former recruiter for Vance-Granville Community College, stresses that occupational teachers need to move from technical knowledge to focusing their attention on **students**.

In order to help them become people-oriented, he recommends use of the **AIDA** formula, (**ATTENTION, INTEREST, DESIRE, ACTION**). It is a useful guide when dealing one-on-one with prospective students.

The first component is **ATTENTION**. Greet each person that walks into your office in a friendly and personable manner. Move from the "comfort zone" (behind the teacher's desk) and walk around to shake his hand. Take the time to establish a proper introduction. Again, technically-oriented people, like occupational teachers, often move too quickly into technical knowledge without taking the time to be sociable first.

INTEREST is the second component. Key in on the student as a person. Discuss work; ask direct questions. If he responds with "I don't like my job," ask "What would you like to do?" Use an interest inventory if nothing surfaces through conversation. Discover the student's primary interest. He may say he is mainly interested in making money, but the key question is "Money to buy what?" The students want money to buy the things they like and have always wanted.

You can tell when students start to talk about their primary interests. Their body language changes. Their faces light up and they lean forward eagerly. Now is when you stress that your program can get them the things they want. Pin down their dreams and tie them into your program.

The third component is **DESIRE**. You must make the student really want what you are offering. Have your program information available. This is often the point when objections are raised. The student may say "I don't have the money" or "I don't have the brains." Don't ignore or dismiss his fears. Validate his feelings by restating his fears, but add "If I can show you that you can make it, would you enroll in this program?"

Discuss financial aid options or success stories of graduates who have had similar problems. Spend whatever amount of time is necessary to make the student's desire overcome the fears. Selling your program is the key; just enrolling a new student does not deal with your retention rate.

ACTION is the last component. Immediately pull out an application and help the student fill it out. Stay as long as it takes. If a prospective student walks into your office at five o'clock, you might be late getting home. If you don't cover each of the AIDA components, or if you just hand him an application and say, "Come back to see me later" you may never see him again. Compare this last step to closing a sale. Don't just talk about doing it; get that

student's signature on the dotted line. Now is also the time to perpetuate your contacts. Ask for the names of any friends who might be interested in your program. Call them, mail them information, or have the student bring them in to see you.

Of course, be prepared for the "self-directed" student. Occasionally, someone will walk in and not wait for you to use the AIDA guide; he will want to fill out an application immediately. If this is the case, **KNOW WHEN TO SHUT UP!** Jump to the action phase and close the sale. Leave things undone; drop everything and deal with the student first. A messy desk is usually a good indication of the number of students coming in and out of an office. The paperwork can wait; your program depends on how you deal with students.

The AIDA formula is a step-by-step approach to deal with initial contacts. Cover these components each time a student walks into your office. Occupational instructors can use the AIDA formula as a tool; it serves as a way to work with people, the way you work with technology.

Follow the AIDA formula when doing group recruitment as well. Make a few changes to adapt to the new situation. Focus **ATTENTION** on the group by commenting on something unique to the class, the program, or the school. Key in on a common **INTEREST** of young people such as a car, a job, or money. Don't elaborate on the technical aspect of your program; emphasize satisfaction. Emphasize what

the program can do for the student. Instill **DESIRE** as you explain your program. Stress the ability to work and go to school at the same time. Lastly, promote **ACTION** by passing out applications. Don't leave students with a vague "Go to see your counselor." A campus visit is sometimes an enticement for students to recruit friends who also are interested in your program.

MATTRESS OF BENEFITS

Another useful recruiting technique is to explain the "**MATTRESS**" of Benefits. These are the benefits that will be available to students who complete your program. They include the opportunity for:

- M - money
- A - advancement
- T - training
- T - travel
- R - recreation
- E - education
- S - security
- S - satisfaction

Whenever you talk to anyone about your program, continually stress the advantages that completing your program can bring to the average person.

CENTERS OF INFLUENCE

Mr. Parsons also maintains what he calls "**Centers of Influence.**" Keep a mailing list of individuals you have talked to about your program and like what you're

doing. They may be parents, school personnel, business/industry representatives, etc. Periodically mail out letters that inform them of what is going on in your area. It may concern an award one of your students has received or any new equipment you have purchased. Keeping in touch with these people may result in referrals to your program. Someone will always be talking about the good things going on in your classroom.

II. GET TO KNOW YOUR IEC'S

One of the best ways to improve your enrollment is to work with the Industry Education Coordinators (IEC) at your local high schools. According to their job description, they are responsible for developing a line of communication/liaison between the high school and business, industry, labor, and the community college. They also act as resources for information on marketable skills and other information related to employment and training. These people work strictly with students enrolled in occupational classes and assist them with career planning and post-secondary placement. Through the use of interest inventories and aptitude tests, they often can provide you with a list of students who may be interested in your program. The IEC is in the perfect position to guide graduating high school students to your program.

While discussing career choices with students, the IEC could be the first person to talk with them about an interest in your program. Make sure they have the

information they need. Being able to tell a student about simple things, such as the exact location of your program on campus, the type of instruction in your program, and the names of former classmates who are now enrolled in your program, could mean the difference between an increase or a decline in the student's interest.

You can make yourself invaluable to the IEC by serving as a resource during Career Days or Job Fairs. You can provide information on local labor market trends and salary ranges. Many IEC's conduct "shadowing" experiences for their students and are looking for business and industry contacts who will allow students to observe for one day. Helping someone else do a better job will certainly pay off when an IEC is working with a student who has no career direction. Because you were helpful, your program will be one of the first to come to mind.

Through the IEC, work with the academic teachers at the high schools to sell your program. English, math, and science teachers work every day with good students who are not suited to pursue a four-year degree. Many are looking for practical and realistic topics/activities relating to the world of work that they can incorporate into their teaching. Math teachers especially would welcome you into their classrooms to explain to their students how necessary math skills are for getting a good job.

III. PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT GETS GREAT RETURNS

Make your face known at the high schools. Ask the vocational teachers if you may simply observe their classes. Try to talk with students during their break or lunch. When students have questions, they often are hesitant to call or visit your campus. Counselors will encourage them to do so, but they are more likely to make contact if they have seen your face or know your name.

If you want to reach high school students who are often not highly motivated to begin with, you have to go after them. By spending time at the high schools, you will soon recognize the students that seem interested in your program but may not have the initiative to follow through on their own. Get their phone numbers and give them a call at night. Keep them informed about the options your program offers. Easter break is a good time to follow up with another call. The students are usually home, or you may be able to talk to their parents. Graduation is right around the corner, and even the least motivated are facing the question of what to do now.

Make sure high school personnel know enough about your program to advise seniors. It is difficult for high school staff to recommend a program to students if they don't know anything about it. Invite IEC's, counselors, and vocational

teachers to your campus. Set up a tour/demonstration during a teacher workday. Have your school provide lunch, if possible. Be ready to provide transportation. Use the school van; drive up to the door and chauffeur these teachers to your campus. When you make all the arrangements, you can present an offer they can't refuse.

Familiarize high school personnel with your program. Explain your method of instruction; demonstrate the equipment you use. Tell them about graduates of your program--where they work and what kind of salaries they make. They will begin to see the need for advising good students about your program.

Teachers also need to know about realistic career opportunities available in the community. Be ready to go into their classrooms and speak about the opportunities that training in your program provides. Too many high school teachers are not aware of the salary that a skilled technician can command. They are not always knowledgeable about the changes in technology that demand a craftsman to have advanced math and computer skills. Ask to speak at a teachers' meeting. Bring refreshments and pass out your literature. Make sure everyone gets the message that your program is producing highly skilled people who make good salaries.

Teachers aren't the only ones you need to sell. Many high school students are under tremendous pressure from their parents to apply to universities and to

consider only white collar occupations. The best way to fight this attitude is to educate the parents early. Attend the local parent/teacher organizations' meetings. Make parents aware that only 43% of freshmen who enter the NC university system graduate. Quote some startling figures from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, i.e., by 1995, 85% of all occupations will require post-secondary training but only 30% of these will require a four-year degree. Try to show them that a four-year degree is not necessarily a requirement for a good salary, but be ready to stress the transferability of an associate degree toward a bachelor's degree. Explain how their children can obtain the skills to get good-paying jobs and attend college at night, if necessary, to finance their education. Again, be ready with the names of employers who hire your graduates and explain to these parents what kind of potential salaries your program can provide their children. Invite them to visit your program area, talk to your students, and see your equipment.

Keep working at making your program visible. Bring your equipment to the schools. Show high school or junior high students how special equipment operates. Show them what they will be doing in your program. Bring one of your present students to talk with them and demonstrate the equipment. Set up during lunch or ask the IEC to put you into specific classrooms: math, computer science, trade and industrial education. Take the names of students who seem particularly interested. The IEC could provide you with phone

numbers and addresses for later contacts. Call these students personally and set up a tour of the campus and your program. To put it simply, make a contact and **FOLLOW UP, FOLLOW UP, AND FOLLOW UP!**

Although it is helpful to know all the vocational teachers in the high schools, it really pays to establish a relationship with the vocational club advisors. The sponsors of VICA (Vocational Industrial Clubs of America), FFA (Future Farmers of America), and AIASA (American Industrial Arts Student Association) work with students who are usually more motivated than the average students. Most of these students have a career goal in mind, and it is never too early to begin acquainting them with your program. Ask the sponsor for a list of club members -- sophomores and juniors -- as well as seniors -- and start making personal contacts. Get involved in their activities. Offer your personal services as a judge, or see if your school can host their yearly competitive events. Having these students on your campus and getting to know them can provide a direct link to your program.

Another potential resource is 6th, 7th, and 8th grade career exploration programs. By definition, these classes are designed to expose students to different career options at an earlier age. Impressing these younger students with the benefits of your program may not bring immediate results, but the long term effects are obvious.

Help school personnel plan field trips to your campus and specifically to see your program area. It is often better to work personally with the classroom teacher rather than try to coordinate schedules through the IEC or counselor. Usually classroom teachers welcome the opportunity to get away from school and do something different with their students. But many times, lack of transportation is a major obstacle. If you can overcome the problem by obtaining vans or a bus, you can arrange for the group to spend quality time in your area, at your convenience. In other words, you can control what they see and when they see it.

Encourage your occupational recruiter to schedule high school visitation days for students to come and see the occupational programs on your campus. Be sure that when students see your area, you make a good first impression. Your shop should be clean and orderly and your current students interested and involved in their work. Make everyone in your department aware that the students are coming; everyone associated with your program is a recruiter. The entire staff must be ready to answer questions and be able to talk about enrollment procedures. Promoting a pleasant learning environment will go a long way with high school students; many have been used to very structured situations

IV. RECRUITING NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Mostly, this manual has addressed how to recruit high school students. This section will deal with recruiting the older or non-traditional students. Keep in mind that many of the circumstances which classify students as "non-traditional" may be obstacles that prevent them from enrolling in your program. You must be flexible enough to deal with minor problems. For example, if a second job prevents a student from getting to class on time, you may need to set up some flex-time for this particular student. A "common sense" approach is needed when dealing with the adult student population.

One effective way to reach non-traditional students is to go where they spend most of their time -- the workplace. Begin by contacting the personnel officers of the businesses and industries that are most likely to employ graduates of your program. Find out from them what skills are necessary for potential employees and what classes they would like their employees to take. Make it clear that you are interested in meeting the needs of the community. Supply them with class schedules, academic calendars and posters advertising your program. Ask them to post this information in the breakroom, or at least get the word out that they have this information available.

By establishing a working relationship with personnel officers, you may obtain permission to set up a display in the breakroom with brochures and pictures of

your program operation. At the beginning of each quarter, ask to have an onsite registration period. Post the notice a week in advance that you will be in the breakroom for a designated period. Cover each shift, bring applications, and be available to help with the registration process.

Another potential source is GED applicants. These people have obviously seen the need for acquiring a higher educational level and may need to upgrade their skills as well. Make contact with the director of this and other adult education programs at your school. Obtain the names and addresses of people enrolled in these programs and get information about your program to them, either personally or through the mail.

Non-traditional students are also usually interested in financial aid and available scholarships. Since money is often a problem, be ready with information on student loans, grants, and work-study programs. Know what scholarships are applicable to students in your program. If you find there are not many scholarship opportunities for them, it may be necessary to approach business and industry and actively solicit financial support. With tuition costs so low at the community college, many business leaders would find the idea of supporting a scholarship feasible.

Another way to reach non-traditional students is through participation in special events. Make yourself available to speak or demonstrate equipment to civic

groups. Members of these organizations often have employees who could benefit from your program. Have your students set up an exhibit at the mall; participate in fairs and farm shows. Hand out your literature at local celebrations. Don't pass up any opportunity to spread the good news about your program.

Much of the good news about your program concerns job opportunities and earnings. Non-traditional students usually know what it is like to work full time for low wages or not be employed at all. Have specific information ready to hand out, listing salary schedules and job openings in your area. This information is usually available in your placement office. If you prove to these potential students that there are good jobs out there, that may be all the convincing they need.

Using "give aways," keep the name of your school in the public eye. There is usually money budgeted for promotional items bearing your school name such as pens, calendars, notepads, etc. You can usually get these from your recruiting or marketing staff. Pass out the inexpensive items whenever you speak with any group. It may be worth spending more on non-consumable items to give administrators. Coffee cups, for example, could sit on the desks of personnel managers or school counselors and remind employees or students about their local community college.

Don't forget to use your advisory committee as a recruiting tool; it is an essential part of your program. In order

to be effective, your committee should reflect a broad focus and be composed of a diverse group of people: bankers, farmers, technical people, personnel managers, high school personnel, etc. Ask them to serve as potential speakers for your program. Brainstorm and generate a list of potential contacts. Use ten to twenty people to meet as a group twice a year. It is also a good idea to keep personal contact with individual members. Perhaps have lunch once a week with a couple of members of your committee. **Always be knowledgeable about their needs and take advantage of their contacts.**

If your school does not have a recruitment committee, it is a good idea to get one started. This group should reflect a cross section of school personnel, business and industry leaders, and students. Public school administrators and teachers should be represented along with community college administrators and faculty. The purpose of this committee would be to plan and coordinate recruitment activities. The group could brainstorm for new ideas as well as evaluate existing methods. They would meet every quarter and examine what is working and what is not. What makes this group different is having student input. Often teachers think they know what attracts students; many times students have an entirely different perception. One good way to find out what works is to ask the students.

Obviously, most of the success of your recruiting efforts lies in making contacts and following up. When it is not possible to do this personally, one effective method is the use of direct mail. High school counselors can provide you with mailing lists of graduating seniors, and, as was mentioned earlier, IEC's can provide you with names of vocational students who are interested in your program. It is vital that your school recruiters or counselors have a system in place to organize referrals and make sure you receive information on prospective students. A series of letters follow in the appendix that you can adapt to your own specific situation and needs. Coordinate a schedule to ensure that duplications do not occur and that letters are mailed in a systematic and timely manner. Making sure that prospects receive information from you, your occupational recruiter, a student in your school, or perhaps even the Dean of Students, adds the personal touch that might not be realized otherwise.

IV. THE FINAL TOUCH

Obviously, effective recruiting involves a great deal of time. You must establish a relationship with the IEC, teachers, and school administration to have access to the students you are trying to reach. You must maintain contact with business and industry and meet the needs of their employees. Always remember to thank these people for their help with your recruiting efforts. Whether it is bringing refreshments to a staff meeting or taking

someone out to lunch, showing your appreciation can only result in making recruiting easier.

This manual has reviewed several techniques for recruiting traditional and non-traditional students. Making your program visible and handling referrals is an important part of the process. But it cannot be emphasized enough that face-to-face communication is the most important tool. Nothing takes the place of getting to know potential students personally, sitting down with them and really listening to what they have to say. If you use the AIDA formula and offer students options, your recruiting efforts will begin to pay off. Your program will be full and there may be a waiting list of people wanting what you have to offer. **GOOD LUCK!**

APPENDIX

College Stationery

Date

High School Senior
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

Now that you're a senior this year, you'll be facing several important decisions. Plans for a future--for a career, for further education--are or will soon be prominent in your thinking and in the minds of your family and friends.

We, at Pitt Community College, are aware of and sensitive to the difficulties in making these decisions. That's why we have trained counselors who specialize in career planning. You can come to the counseling center, look through our booklets, use a computerized career interest inventory matched up to job prospects and training requirements throughout North Carolina, and go over your aptitudes and preferences with our staff.

Expanded programs of study and enrollment growth make this an exciting time to be a PCC student. There is a wealth of resources here for you, plus the personal attention that only the community college in your hometown area can give. Students and their needs come first at PCC.

Enclosed you'll find a General Information brochure about PCC. Plan to visit our campus and see firsthand all the opportunities available for you. Please write or call our office today at (919) 355-4245 to arrange for an appointment. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Garrie Moore
Dean of Students

College Stationery

Date

Non-Traditional Student
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

I was pleased to learn of your interest in Pitt Community College, and I hope you'll choose to enroll here. In today's competitive world, I'm sure you know the value of marketable employment skills. We can assist you in your educational growth and development and in your pursuit of a career.

Enclosed you'll find some information about PCC along with an application for admission. These materials highlight the programs and learning resources available. You may want to take particular note of the financial aid programs and services, and you'll want to follow up with that depending on your need. Our Financial Aid Office can assist you personally, help you determine your needs and work through the financial aid application process.

Why not send in your application form and materials and begin the admissions process? With today's emphasis on getting a good job through advanced education and training, it makes sense to look at the college that can help you get where you

really want to go in life. At Pitt
Community College, we can do just that!
Our faculty and staff will give you
personal attention to your needs. We
promise.

Sincerely,

Garrie Moore
Dean of Students

College Stationery

Date

Non-Traditional Student
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

I enjoyed meeting and talking with you the other day and learning of your interest in Pitt Community College. I appreciate your interest in upgrading your employment skills and realize there must be many important questions in your mind. PCC can be the solution as you develop new goals and search for different career options.

Certainly PCC has much to offer you! We have over 25 technical programs leading to the associate degree and to exciting career opportunities. We also offer 13 occupational programs of shorter duration with concentrated job-training. After you've decided on a program and career area, you may wish to take advantage of our job placement service which secures placement in both full-time and part-time jobs. With the education and training our programs provide, you can enter that exciting career you've always wanted and command the higher salary that goes with it.

Our faculty and staff are fully prepared to work with you and help you deal with questions and problems as they arise.

We take a personal interest in our students and pride ourselves on graduating people equipped with the competitive edge it takes to make it in today's job market.

Please come by my office or call me at 355-0000. I look forward to seeing you and welcome the opportunity to show you what we can do for you.

Sincerely,

John Jones
Vocational Recruiter

College Stationery

Date

High School Senior
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

I enjoyed meeting and talking with you the other day and learning of your interest in Pitt Community College. With graduation approaching, I know there must be many important decisions on your mind. PCC can offer you many different career options and enable you to meet your needs as you prepare for your future.

Certainly PCC has much to offer you! We have over 25 technical programs leading to the associate degree and to exciting career opportunities. We also offer 13 occupational programs of shorter duration with concentrated job-training. After you've decided on a program and career area, you may wish to take advantage of our job placement service, which secures placement in both full-time and part-time jobs. We also have many cooperative education and practical work experience options as you continue to study here. All these services are designed to bring you closer to the world of work--and to the specific career you have in mind.

I've enclosed a simple brochure designed to let you know about the benefits

of study with PCC and about our career development services. Our faculty is fully prepared to work with you and help you deal with questions and problems as they arise. We take a personal interest in our students and pride ourselves on graduating people equipped with the competitive edge it takes to make it in today's job market.

Plan to visit our campus and see firsthand all the opportunities available for you. Please come by my office or call me at 355-0000. I look forward to seeing you and welcome the opportunity to help you make those difficult decisions.

Sincerely,

John Jones
Vocational Recruiter

COLLEGE STATIONERY

Date

Prospect's Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

I heard from a member of our Admission's Staff that you are interested in learning more about Pitt Community College. I know that you are facing many tough decisions regarding what you want to do with your life. Questions such as:

- What am I really interested in doing?
- What programs or courses are best for me?
- How many years or terms do I really plan to stay in college?
- Will the courses be too difficult or easy for me?
- How can I fit study and classes into my daily schedule?

-Can I afford it?

I faced all these questions myself just a few months ago. But the people at PCC helped me find answers to my questions and made me feel right at home. Our faculty and staff are fully prepared to work with you as you fulfill your study and career plans.

Pitt Community College was the right choice for me. I feel good about the career decisions I have made. I am enrolled in a co-op program that enables me to gain work experience as I continue my studies. I am learning to budget my time so I can get my work done and still make time for FUN! PCC can provide you with a place to learn and grow as you prepare for the world of work--and the specific career you have in mind.

The best way for you to learn about PCC is to visit us. Explore our campus and talk to other students. Ask or call me at the SGA office or call me at home at 756-0000. I would love to take time to share my experiences at PCC with you and answer any questions that you may have. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Joan Smith
SGA President

College Stationary

Date

High School Senior
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

So you want to be a machinist! You are choosing an exciting and challenging program that can lead to many career opportunities and financial success. We are delighted to learn of your interest in our speciality.

At Pitt Community College, the machinist curriculum lasts four quarters with students in class approximately five to six hours per day. You will learn to set up and operate the machine tools found in modern shops by working on up-to-date equipment. When you complete our course requirements, you will be skilled in Computer Numerical Control. You will be a proficient metalworker, accomplished in the process of turning a block of metal into an intricate, precise part.

The brief brochure I have enclosed only highlights some of the reasons why students are choosing Pitt Community College. We are designed to provide you with program flexibility, quality teaching, excellent technical facilities, practical applications, and meaningful advisement. We can give you the personal attention that

your local community college can provide,
and our cost is remarkably low.

If you want to be a machinist and gain
career skills, we want you to enroll in
PCC. Our Admissions Office will respond
personally to your application, and our
Career Planning and Placement Office will
keep you informed of the many opportunities
available to you.

Come by the shop today. Talk with
students and take a look at the equipment.
We can help you get where you want to be.

Sincerely,

John Jones
Instructor

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