Writing Effective COVID Impact Statements: Emerging Insights and Best Practices

April 26, 2021
2:00 – 3:00 PM, ET
Today’s Facilitators

Adrienne Minerick
Michigan Technological University

Agnieszka Miguel
Seattle University
Poll

Has your institution requested a COVID-19 impact statement?

- Yes, required of everyone
- Yes, voluntary if ‘relevant to you’
- Yes, but it replaces an existing summary narrative (e.g. not add on)
- No

Has your funding agency requested a COVID-19 impact statement with a proposal submission?

- Yes, required of everyone
- Yes, voluntary if ‘relevant to you’
- Yes, but it replaces an existing summary narrative (e.g. not add on)
- No
Impacts of COVID-19

The general picture

Increase in faculty workloads

➔ moving classes online, mentoring students, mitigating risks of pandemic, restructuring programs, ...

Damage to research productivity

➔ lack of access to labs and facilities, inability to travel to research sites or to meet collaborators and attend conferences, lack of time, ...

Fragmented work time

➔ due to illness, caregiving, homeschooling responsibilities, ...
Differential Impacts of COVID-19

Pandemic did not cause new inequities – instead, it exacerbated existing disadvantages

- Limited work time due to caregiver responsibilities and homeschooling
- Disproportionately falls on women
- Increased demand to mentor students
- Women and faculty of color are more likely to fill that role
Variable by research field...

→ Delays due to restrictions on human and animal subject, laboratory equipment/supplies, fieldwork, and research-related travel activities

◆ Experimental, biologic-related, human-centered, chemical fields more heavily impacted than theoretical, simulation, computing-related fields.

◆ Representation of women and faculty of color higher in the former
Many women academics will likely bear a greater burden during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Jessica L. Malisch et al. PNAS 2020;117:27:15378-15381
Intersections of Differential Impacts of COVID-19

Caregiving

Bio/Human Centric Research

Service (mentor/Student support)
Poll

Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted you? If yes, in what way? (select all that apply)

- [ ] No
- [ ] Yes, caregiving impacts (in all forms)
- [ ] Yes, additional teaching responsibilities
- [ ] Yes, additional mentoring responsibilities
- [ ] Yes, research disruptions (in all forms)
- [ ] Yes, additional service responsibilities (in all forms)
- [ ] Yes, other (please add to chat)
Deep and Persistent Weariness

The exacerbation of existing disadvantages... COVID Impact to COVID Recovery

- Acknowledge extreme pandemic fatigue, with the associated feeling that people cannot sustain an increased level of effort much longer
- Uncertainty or barriers to mental health resources
  - Help with coping, but do not fix the disadvantages
What is a COVID-19 Impact Statement?

Should be uniformly requested of everyone

Narrative that documents the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on faculty work conditions and productivity.

➔ Potentially utilized for annual reviews, merit reviews, and/or tenure and promotion reviews

➔ Funding agencies are also requesting this with proposals, annual reports, supplemental funding requests, etc.
## Controversy/Concerns with COVID-19 Impact Statement

Statements are being widely debated at many institutions

| Will this information be used against a person at a later point in their career? | Concerns about writing a statement that may reveal personal information traditionally deemed irrelevant in STEM cultures (Cech, Nature, 2014) | Opt-In vs. Opt-Out discussions to reframe default state. |
COVID-19 has exacerbated existing gender inequities.
Benefits of Impact Statements

For faculty, institutions, and professional community

➔ Increase awareness
➔ Prevent variable COVID impacts from worsening existing inequalities
➔ Help universities / funding agencies recognize differential impacts of COVID-19 (mitigate against unequal outcomes)
➔ Lead to fair assessment of faculty products/productivity
➔ Demonstrate adaptability, creativity, pivots
Best Practices for Writing COVID-19 Impact Statements

General thoughts

➔ No need to detail every impact
➔ Instead, identify impacts of COVID-19 on your career trajectory (new responsibilities and unexpected challenges)
➔ Bring to light relevant but potentially invisible impacts
➔ Decide how much to disclose about caregiving situation, health impacts, homeschooling responsibilities, personal losses, etc.
➔ Are there special accomplishments resulting from the switch to remote work that you want to highlight?
◆ Outline a path to recovery - e.g. your problem solving
Changes to courses including moving them online
Learning to use new technologies including required training
- Technology challenges experienced by faculty and students
- Additional teaching responsibilities (side instruction, quizzes, etc.)
  - Increased email load from students, challenges to office hours
→ Loss of research time due to increased ‘other’ responsibilities
→ Lack of access to research facilities and/or research subjects
  ◆ Equipment/supply delays
→ Canceled conferences, seminars, speaking engagements, and meetings with collaborators
→ Reduced productivity of research staff, support staff
  ◆ Grants continue to fund personnel, but slower progress to milestones
→ Lost field research opportunities, lost or restricted research funding
→ Additional time and resources needed to restart research
Best Practices for Writing COVID-19 Impact Statements

Leadership and Engagement

- Changes in advising/committee workload, supporting others making transitions
  - Attendance in additional meetings (COVID-logistics task forces)
- Increased demands to learn mental health strategies and encourage those behaviors in students/colleagues
- Responding to student barriers/concerns (mental and physical health, economic impact)
- Contributions to professional societies pandemic initiatives
Describe the ways in which the global pandemic will affect this research, including but not limited to:
- access to study participants, access to research sites, access to work products/artifacts, and impact on budget.
- In all cases, please provide
  - (i) a statement of the impact on the research, and
  - (ii) your mitigation strategies (including a revised timeline, if necessary) that will enable you to meet the research objectives. Please use the sample format below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVID-related issue</th>
<th>Research impact</th>
<th>Mitigation plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-person access to study participants</td>
<td>We cannot do in-person interviews because our IRB office currently prohibits in-person contact with study participants.</td>
<td>We will use videoconferencing tools to conduct (virtual) in-person interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etc.
Today’s Panelists

Paige Smith  
University of Maryland

Keith Hargrove  
Tennessee State University

Sergio F. Breña  
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Questions for Panelists
We discussed crafting statements for different audiences (merit, promotion vs. funding agency). What are your thoughts on including personal information in the statements to augment impact/future directions?
Bias is well documented in decision making in academia. What can individuals do to craft statements that minimize bias in the present, 3 years from now, and 5 years from now (during key decision points like tenure/promotion)?
1. UMass ADVANCE:

Next Steps

- Share your feedback ...
- Access webinar materials.
Thank you!