

 **ASEE WEBINAR**

# 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

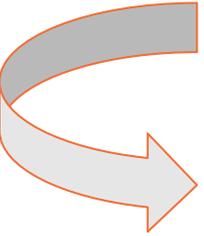
- lack of access to labs and facilities, inability to travel to research sites or to meet collaborators and attend conferences, lack of time, ...

### 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**

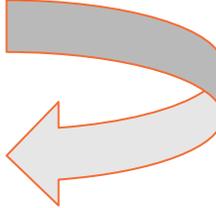


Limited work time due to caregiver responsibilities and homeschooling

Disproportionately falls on women

Increased demand to mentor students

Women and faculty of color are more likely to fill that role



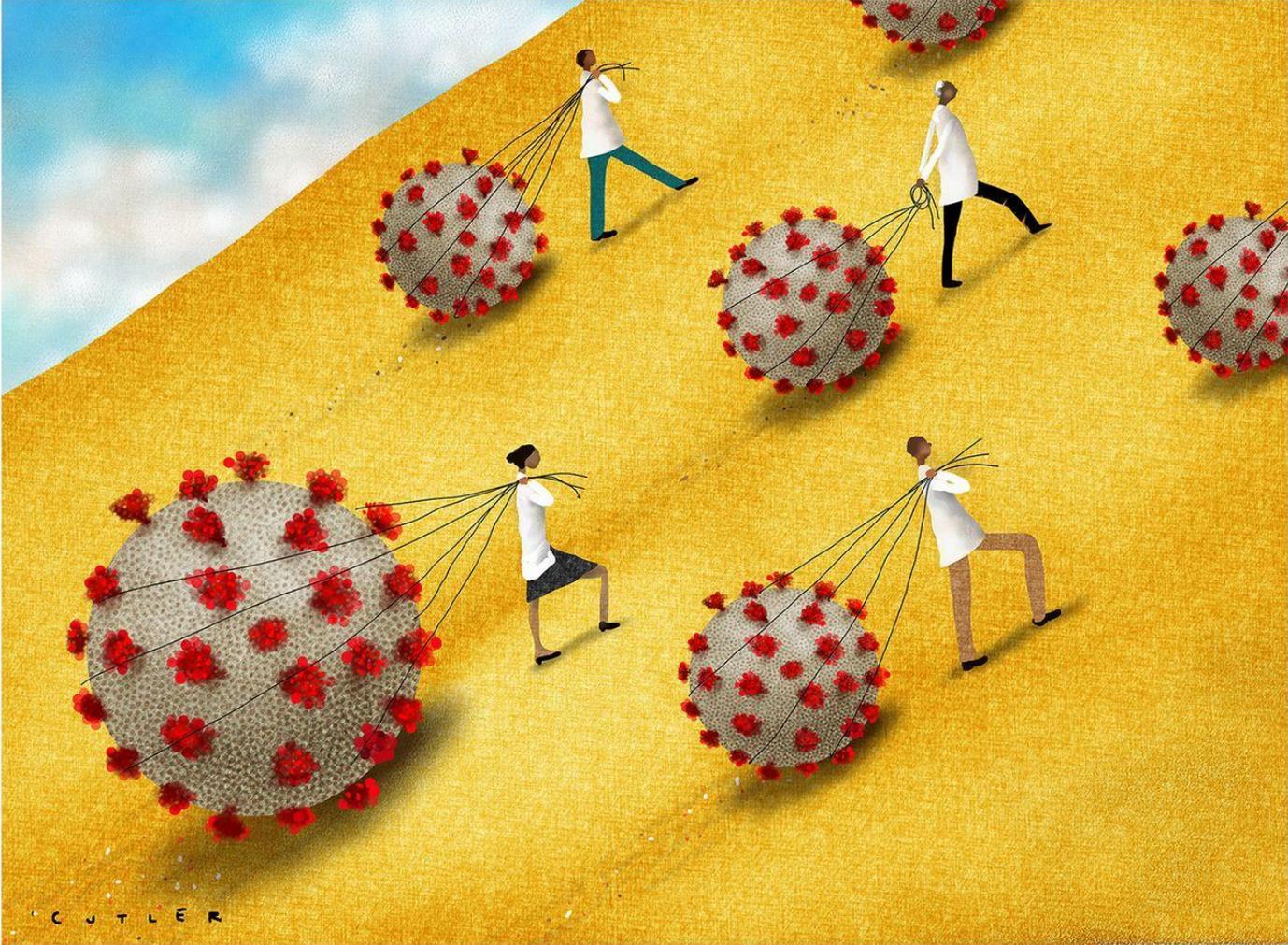
# Differential Impacts of COVID-19

## The Research Field Picture

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.

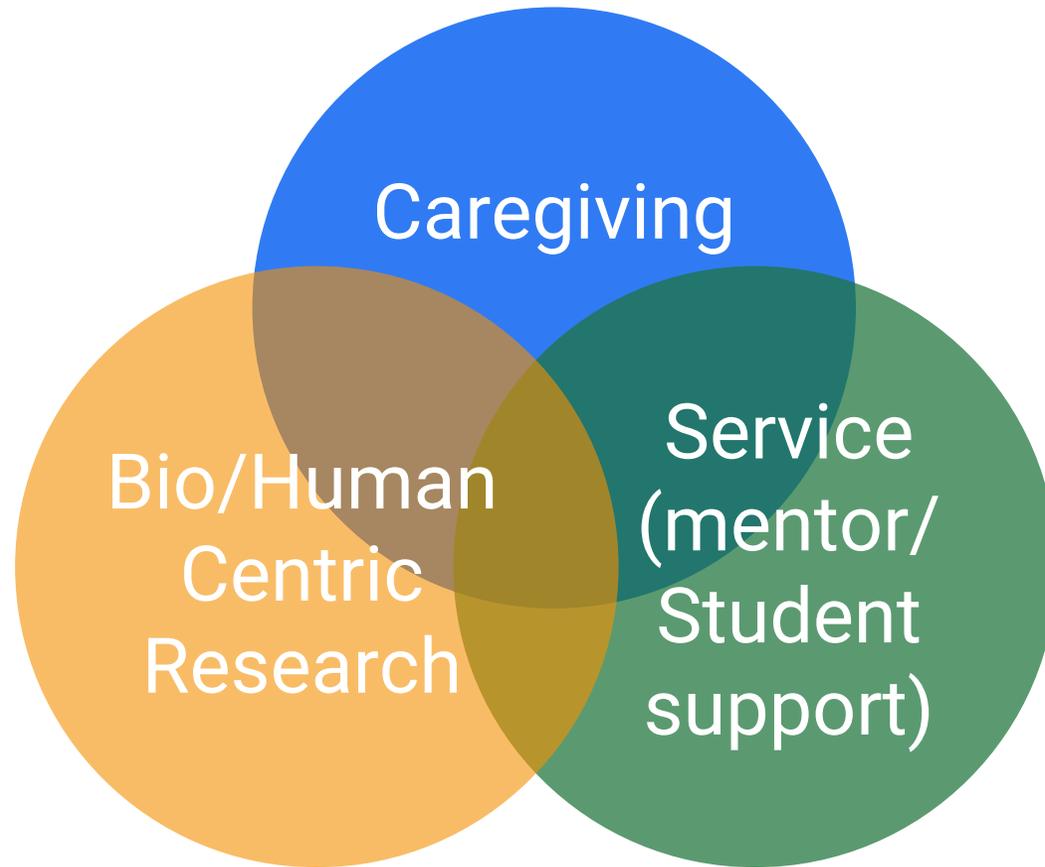


Jessica L. Malisch et al. PNAS 2020;117:27:15378-15381

PNAS



# Intersections of Differential Impacts of COVID-19



# 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

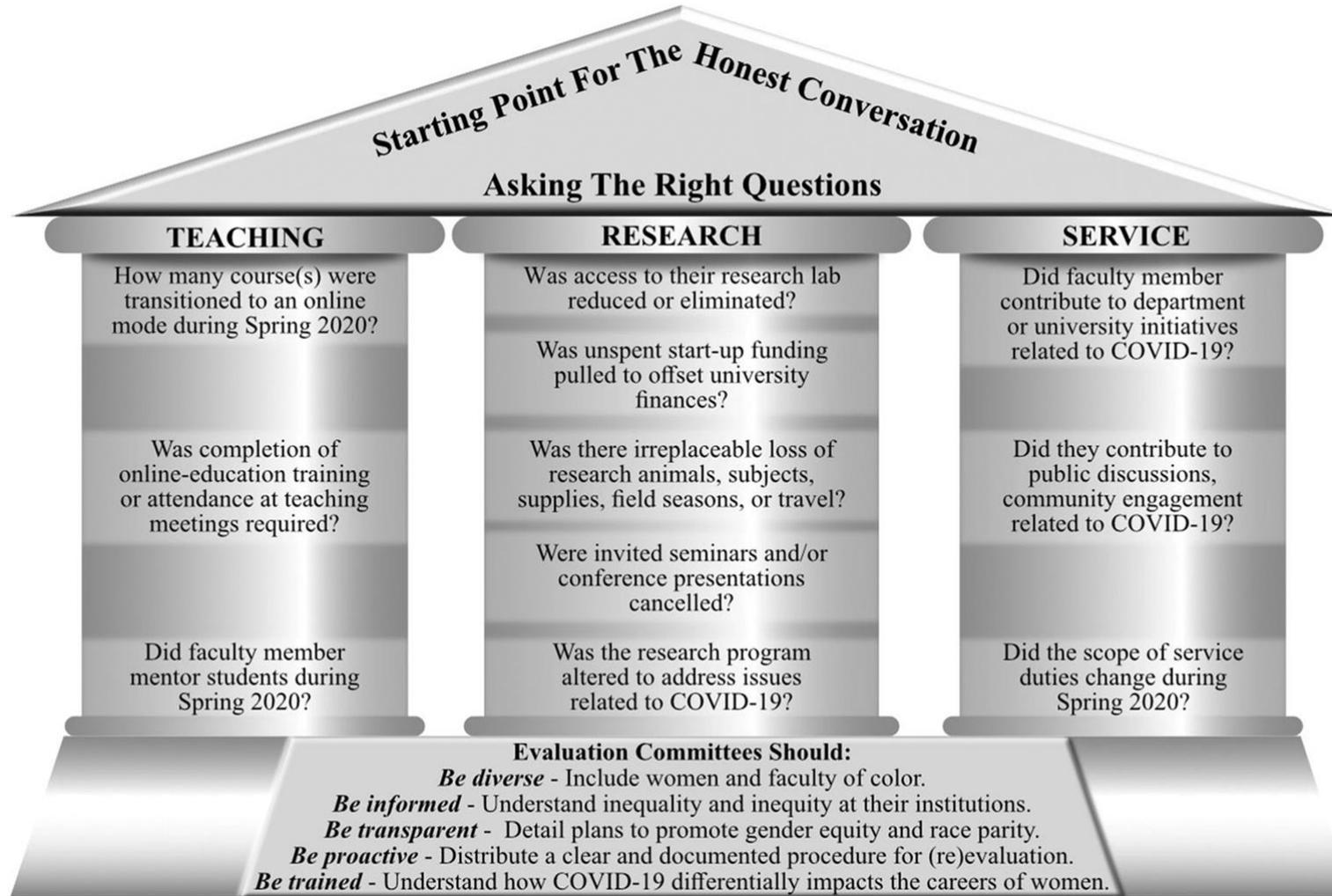
Will this information be used against a person at a later point in their career?

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.



Jessica L. Malisch et al. PNAS 2020;117:27:15378-15381



# 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**

# Best Practices for Writing COVID-19 Impact Statements

## Teaching and Learning

### Document:

- 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

# Best Practices for Writing COVID-19 Impact Statements

## Research and Scholarship

- 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

# Example structure for COVID statements from a funding agency

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:

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



# Resources

1. UMass ADVANCE:

<https://www.umass.edu/advance/sites/default/files/inline-files/UMass%20ADVANCE%20COVID-19%20Tool%20August%2017%202020%20Final.pdf>

2. Subramaniam, Mangala. 2020. Best Practices Tool #1: Documenting the Impact of COVID-19 on Faculty (tenure track/tenured). Susan Bulkeley Butler Center for Leadership Excellence, Purdue University:

<https://www.purdue.edu/butler/documents/Best-Practices-Tool-1-Documenting-Impact-of-COVID-19-for-tenure-track-and-tenured-faculty.pdf>

# Next Steps



Share your feedback ...



Access webinar materials.

# Thank you!

