



## UD ADVANCE: Writing COVID-19 Impact Statements April 17, 2023

### Panelists:

Robin Andreasen, Professor, Linguistics & Cognitive Science

Nicole Donofrio, Professor, Plant & Soil Science

### Resources for Writing Impact Statements

#### **UD ADVANCE Resources**

<https://sites.udel.edu/advance/2021/04/12/ud-advance-covid-resource/>

#### **UD Task Force on Equity in Faculty Evaluation**

[https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/9/2591/files/2021/02/Equity-in-Faculty-Evaluations-Task-Force-Report\\_2-11-21.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/9/2591/files/2021/02/Equity-in-Faculty-Evaluations-Task-Force-Report_2-11-21.pdf)

-This document has a useful list of potential COVID impacts across research, teaching, service.

#### **UD Faculty Handbook**

<https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.udel.edu/dist/4/5250/files/2023/03/FACULTY-HANDBOOK-3.15.23.pdf>

-Section 4.4.18 of the FHB, Temporary COVID Related Changes, includes the university COVID impact statement policy.

#### **UMass Amherst Resource - Documenting Pandemic Impacts**

<https://www.umass.edu/advance/documenting-pandemic-impacts-best-practices>

### Audience Q&A

**Q:** *What is the purpose of the COVID impact statement?*

**A:** This document helps reviewers understand how your career trajectory has been affected by the pandemic. The broad goal is to ensure your professional achievements will be judged relative to opportunity.

**Q:** *What format should this statement take?*

**A:** The specifics of how you format the document and what you include is up to you to decide. That being said, here are suggestions from our panelists:

- Keep your impact statement relatively brief (1-2 pages) and focus on key impacts that affected your career trajectory, rather than exhaustively documenting everything. You may also reference impacts in your research, teaching, or service statements. For example, in your impact statement you could briefly explain pandemic constraints that



led you to shift research focus and develop a new research program, and then go into more detail about the new projects in your research statement.

- As best you can, document where your productivity was impacted and why. For example: shifted/compressed work hours due to childcare demands, lack of access to field work or lab space, publishing delays due to slowdowns at journals/presses, increased teaching loads, new course prep or online/hybrid course development, ad-hoc student advising above and beyond your normal load.
- One narrative strategy is explaining how you mitigated the professional impacts you experienced. You might take the negative impacts and spin them into a heroic narrative or explain how you pivoted to creatively address these challenges.
- No matter the format, structure the impact statement around your trajectory and your achievement relative to opportunity. Demonstrate that despite pandemic impacts, you are productive and contributing to your department. Ensure reviewers can see that your professional trajectory will continue upward, even if it slowed due to the pandemic.
- If you're feeling unsure about your statement or having trouble with how to write about your experiences, you can share a draft with trusted colleagues and get feedback.

**Q:** *Do you have tips for how to clearly communicate impacts, keep the statement easy to read, or otherwise organize information?*

**A:** Be sure to write for a general audience and avoid discipline-specific jargon or overly technical details. That way members of the college and university P&T committees will not miss the key takeaways of your statement. Using a combination of paragraphs and bullet points can keep the statement easy to read. Tables are also useful to convey information. For example, you might use a table to show your actual workload during the pandemic as compared to your official or standard workload.

**Q:** *My research productivity has been affected, but I'm unsure how (or if) to write about it. Will an impact statement hurt how evaluators view my dossier?*

**A:** One strategy is to think about the overall story you tell in your impact statement. You want to be sure your statement isn't simply a list of impacts, but communicates how you're still meeting departmental expectations, perhaps with a slowed trajectory. This will be useful for addressing concerns from colleagues whose own work may not have been similarly affected. You might talk about positives/wins since the pandemic that demonstrate that your trajectory is recovering.

**Q:** *What kinds of research impacts are appropriate to include?*

**A:** You can look over the resources listed above for lists of potential impacts. Delayed or missed opportunities for research productivity are important to capture. These might include conferences you couldn't attend, grants that you were unable to submit, or extended peer review timelines that delayed publications. Some faculty experienced impacts when it came to opportunities for international collaborations and international graduate students. For other faculty, impacts will be very long lasting or their research program has changed permanently.



**Q:** *Do I need to share personal details as part of my impact statement?*

**A:** You do not need to include extensive personal information. You will be believed and don't need to prove your experiences, particularly as related to trauma, health, family situations, etc. You are free to share these details or choose not to.

**Q:** *Is it necessary to provide evidence to document impacts? How do I do this?*

**A:** Again, you will be believed. You will want to include specific examples to illustrate impacts and how you adjusted, but you don't need to prove impacts. One related strategy that some faculty have used is to ask their chair or director to write a letter to add to their packet that lays out specific constraints they faced.

**Q:** *How can I address changes in my trajectory due to faculty retirements in 2020, which led to an increased teaching load, new preps, etc.?*

**A:** This experience isn't uncommon. In some colleges the faculty had to step in to teach core classes due to many retirements. Think about how to clearly demonstrate impact, such as teaching overload, new preps, hybrid course delivery, or other time intensive activities. As best you can, quantify impacts. You might start by thinking about how many hours of work this entailed. To help reviewers understand, you might document this as a proportion of workload that is widely understood by colleagues (e.g., equivalent to courses, or standard service appointments in department). Be sure to explain how this shift in teaching took time away from other scholarly work. This is particularly important to do if your workload didn't officially change to take this into account.

**Q:** *Do you have ideas for how to document other ways in which teaching demands increased, such as converting labs to an online format, creating new lab protocols including PPE and safety (for those teaching in-person), or similar issues?*

**A:** It can be difficult to capture the time spent on things like this. You can start by making a list of activities and then translate these into time/workload to help put the work into perspective. Be sure to use language that is clear to an outside audience.

**Q:** *During the pandemic we were expected to accommodate student needs around illness and have more relaxed attendance policies. This has impacted our teaching, as students miss class, don't participate in class, submit late work at the end of the semester, request make up labs and exams, etc. Should I talk about this?*

**A:** Yes. You can document things like creating make up exams, recreating labs, helping students get caught up with material, etc. This can be hard to quantify, but you can say the demands of teaching are more intensive than they used to be and give one or two examples, rather than a laundry list. One model is to look at your departmental documents for P&T and for merit, to see how similar efforts might be captured. For example, some departments have merit metrics that reward extra effort in teaching, which includes activities that are above and beyond normal expectations. If you frame your impact statement this way, it fits the language that is already recognized in departmental documents.