# Learning Outcomes Assessment: Impact Statements with Impact

## What are impact statements and why do we care?

An impact report is a brief summary, in ordinary language, of the benefit of your educational efforts on student success. Simply put, impact is the difference educational experiences make on the achievement of learning outcomes. Plan for impact when developing your curriculum.

### Impact reporting answers four main questions:

1.) What changes were made?
2.) What difference did those changes make?
3.) So what?
4.) Who cares?

### Ask yourself...

- Did the assessment increase insights into the educational experiences of the program?
- What did this effort do for student engagement?
- What anecdotal evidence do I have?
    - o Single, qualifiable examples of change
    - o Put a human face on the educational experiences
    - o Complement facts and figures
    - o Can be very powerful
    - o To some audiences may mean more than figures
    - o But . . . may not connect with other audiences
- What examples do I have of the effects on student success?
- Has it changed behavior or situations within the program?
- What type of programmatic change occurred?
- Is there data that quantifies change?
- What is the potential for impact on student learning?

### Impact reporting provides a way to:

- Illustrate the importance of assessment
- Show accountability
- Demonstrate a return on investment
- Foster a better public understanding of our focus on learning outcomes
- Obtain future funding
- Increase awareness of our student successes

*Communicating impact goes beyond the number of students in a classroom or the number of classes taught. Impact is what has happened or may happen as a result of those classes and how you used assessment to improve learning.*

## Who cares? Administrators, communicators, and stakeholders!

### University and CFAES administrators care because impact reporting:

- Illustrates our accountability
- Improves visibility of teaching success
- Generates examples for lobbying/fundraising
- Provides a repository of anecdotes for speeches and letters
- Helps us focus on continued excellence in teaching
- Helps build the public's understanding of teaching
- Sells education programs that have outcomes
- Results in an approach that can be applied elsewhere in the academy

### College communicators care because impact reporting:

- Provides great story ideas
- Adds depth to their reporting
- Helps them repurpose content through various communication tools
- Provides content for recruitment and informational campaigns

### Stakeholders care about impact reporting because they:

- They want to know they are making good investments
- Want information vital to decisions
- Look for quantifiable differences brought about by investments in your work

### Who are our stakeholders?

- General public
- Local governing bodies
- State and federal officials
- Parents and potential students
- Current students
- Peers at other universities
- External funders
- Industry representatives
- Accrediting bodies

# How do I write an impact statement?

*Cut through the clutter. Know there is a lot of competition for your targeted information they need.*

## Impact Checklist:

- ✓ Does it answer, "So what?"
- ✓ Does it answer, "Who cares?"
- ✓ Does it show change in learning outcomes?
- ✓ Does is show change in student engagement?
- ✓ Does it show improvement in individual well-being?
- ✓ Does it report the differences your program is making in the learning experiences and accomplishment of students
- ✓ Does it state educational accomplishments and the payoffs to stakeholders in ways non-educators can understand, relate to, and appreciate?

## Writing Checklist:

- ✓ Simple language with no jargon. No acronyms!
- ✓ Be specific. Show your evidence. Use some facts and figures.
- ✓ Be brief and concise.
- ✓ No vague words (for example: very, few, almost, some, highly, often, nearly, significant)
- ✓ Use active voice, not passive.
- ✓ Anecdotes provide human interest. The people who can best tell our story are the people who have been affected by our programs. Let someone else say how great the program is, which is much more effective than when you do it.
- ✓ Use bullets to emphasize your points.

## Impact is Not:

- ✓ An activities report
- ✓ Just the number of students taught
- ✓ Merely a description of the process
- ✓ A technical report or research paper
- ✓ A long, detailed report

Having trouble describing your program's impact? Then, report potential impact.

Sometimes it's hard to define or quantify the impact of your effort. This is especially true when you are introducing a new strategy. Tell us:

- The most likely benefactors of the educational opportunities
- What you expect the outcome to be and why
- An idea of how long it would take to reach expected outcomes
- Real or hypothetical examples of expected outcomes

## Impact Statement Outline:

- Title (or topic)
- Collaborators
- Summary
- Situation (or issue)
- Outcome (or what has been done)
- Impact (actual or potential change)

## Tips for Writing Good Impact Statements:

- Remember the *Ten Principles of Clear Writing*
- Write for 8th grade level
- Write for non-educators
- Do not make exaggerated claims
- Use clear and simple language (no jargon)
- Tell about the differences your program has made
- Longer is not necessarily better
- Keep sentences short
- Use active voice

This information may be helpful as academic programs submit their Learning Outcomes Assessment Award of Distinction application.