



Open comments on IMPACT experience

IMPACT participants who completed the program were invited to take an anonymous survey, which included opportunities to comment openly on their experience. Their replies are included here, grouped by their cohort.

Prompt 1: Overall reflection on your experience in IMPACT: (open comments)

2016A

I was very impressed with the IMPACT program and my growth over the past several months.

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It was a extremely valuable experience. The feedback I received from the IMPACT faculty is different from the one I typically get from my lab colleagues and, although challenging, it helped me to build a much more compelling narrative about my research project. / / My expectation is that the interactions I started to develop during IMPACT will inform my next career step.

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My experience with IMPACT was very positive. Participating in the program definitely helped me crystallize the main points of my research and I was able to use my new skills to develop a presentation for a job interview which was immensely successful. It was great to be able to watch the progression of everyone else's projects and learn about their research. I really valued the diversity of the group of fellows and found the advice of the mentors to be extremely valuable. Deb and Martha were so dedicated and I really appreciate all of the work that they put into the program. I would highly recommend this program to other students and postdocs, especially if they have at least 1 year left in their programs.

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The final presentation session is amazing, and I really felt motivated by the improvement of slide made by myself and the group. I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to all the IMPACT faculty, especially Martha and Deb.

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IMPACT was a wonderful experience and I am very grateful for this opportunity. The time that mentors devoted to our learning experience was astounding. I greatly benefited from the iterative feedback and it definitely changed how I will give future presentations. I enjoyed watching the other trainees grow with me. I think the mix of biology, epidemiology, and engineering creates a stimulating group. / / I hope we will be able to stay in contact with mentors and trainees. Somehow the "forced" public speaking creates a bond that is very comforting and surprising to find as a postdoc. I have missed the feeling of having classmates to be "in the same boat" with. IMPACT recreated that collegiate environment. / / I also felt the mix of mentor background was extremely helpful. Interfacing with clinicians, pharma CEOs,

senior PI's, and senior postdocs all at the same time gives quite a unique spread of feedback that I can't picture receiving in any other setting.

- My experience was definitely limited by my inability to connect with stakeholders. I don't think there's much anyone could do about that. // I hugely appreciate all the time the IMPACT faculty put into the program. Watching a bunch of early-career scientist floundering over the same presentation over and over isn't most people's idea of a good time. The time and feedback provided by the IMPACT faculty was provided extremely generously and made a real difference. THANK YOU!

- I think it is an unique and excellent learning experience, especially for learning ways to communicate people outside of a focused academic research area.

- My experience in the IMPACT program was outstanding. I have a much better sense of how to communicate my work clearly and concisely, and to identify just the pieces of information that really matter for a given audience. The faculty/mentors were incredibly caring, patient, and helpful, and the trainees were all very supportive; a truly, wonderful group of people. As I make decisions in my career and in my research, it is good to know that there are so many deeply thoughtful people who would be happy to help me evaluate the options. All postdocs and advanced graduate students would benefit from having this program, or a similar one, available to them.

- I would like to thank Debora and Martha for this amazing experience - they were both amazingly supportive! /

- Thank you so much!

- The third block seemed less motivating. It felt like we did more of the same. I also was confused about PDAs and their roles. Never met with mine, but perhaps more due to the fact that I was very busy and also on the job market, so didn't want to bother him since I thought a job offer was imminent. But I plan to follow through. // One thing I wanted to mention is that I used the IMPACT model in my own teaching. I taught an undergrad seminar course in which students were asked to develop an applied project. I noticed that they were struggling with thinking their projects through down to the test case and made statements that revealed untested assumptions. So I changed my teaching approach from lecturing to having IMPACT-like sessions in class. The result was that students all developed very solid ideas that could actually be used in real world. They also became very skilled at offering constructive feedback to peers.

- I enjoyed the first month of IMPACT the most, as that is when I felt that I learned the most. I think that fellows came in with a very diverse background in presenting their work and pitching their project to a general audience. I felt that I had had more experience in that respect than others, so often the sessions did not feel as novel for me personally. But the program is terrific for someone coming in with no or very limited exposure to this kind of public speaking about themselves and about their work. // I was truly impressed by all the resources and support we received during the program. In the future it may be helpful to stratify fellows based on their experience in this domain and perhaps offer multiple versions of the program, focusing on

different things, depending on each group's needs, or have fellows attend certain chunks depending on what they want to get out of the program. I also did not realize from the beginning what the time commitment would be. I ended up having difficulty preparing for, and attending sessions especially in late May and June, as I had other commitments come up that I could not get out of. Knowing the full timeline and workload of the program from the very beginning would have been useful in helping me make the most out of it, perhaps postponing it for another semester with fewer other responsibilities. / / Overall, I thought that the program was very well run and provided a much-needed place and set of resources for fellows to practice their skills in talking about the real-world significance of their work and expand their network. Thank you for making this opportunity available to us!

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I was not able to participate in Block 3 much at all because of a prior commitment. I had not realized when I accepted my spot in the IMPACT program that it would go on for so long. I thought it was only going to be 1 month and then it turned out to be 3+ months. / I really enjoyed the 1st month of the IMPACT program. I did not like Block 2 very much and did not think it was the best use of my time (I felt it was too slow and we were trying to take up a full 3 hours just to take up a full 3 hours). This also did not make me very motivated about coming back for Block 3. I was surprised by what a big focus there was on communication and presentation skills in the IMPACT Program. I would recommend the program to people who do not feel comfortable presenting in front of an audience, but otherwise, I don't think the time commitment is necessarily worth it. I think the 1st month was wonderful but that's where I got 90% of my value from the program. The IMPACT faculty are very good in small group sessions to provide feedback and point out the gaps in logic and I really appreciated this.

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It was an invaluable experience to receive many critical, yet constructive criticisms on my project ideas. It was also precious to get to know other IMPACT fellows and faculty, who shares our excitements and I would like to keep in touch after the program.

2016B

Amazing program, helpful peer mentors and an a distinguished faculty and mentors whose feed back helped shaped my research project and bring it to live. Deb in particular is amazingly helpful, patient, tolerant and above all, I felt she took special interest in my work. I am eternally grateful to you all.

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I think the program is great for several reasons, but needs to be better advertised. / Coming in, I thought the sessions would be more about brainstorming the idea rather than how to communicate it. It felt like you had to already have your idea sorted and the we were working on how to present it, but that was not the case for me. I came in thinking that I would explore the impact of my work in a different way. By actually thinking about how this can have an impact in different settings! But this was not the case, this was more about how to present your impact, rather than explore it. Which can be great once you are sure that you are down the right path and you just want to work on truly convincing people of the impact of your work. / / For me it was a little too focused on delivering the one final talk, which at the end of the day is not something that I will show anywhere else. I enjoyed much more the PDA and stakeholders meetings, but

also the people visiting and giving talks about how to communicate more effectively. // So great work, and very impressed with the time faculty and organizers put in this but I think you should really advertise it as sessions to work on how to communicate rather than explore the impact of your work (although I did get to do some of that with stakeholders! maybe that could become a bigger part of the program)

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I think the IMPACT program has been really useful to me, not only to learn how to make an impactful self-introduction and improve how I talk and I present my research but also to expand my networking and get to know great people and awesome mentors. I would definitely recommend it.

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I continue to fully support the mission of IMPACT and feel that Deb has a wonderful vision for the program. I did benefit from the experience, but I was frustrated by the slow pace of the program and the narrow focus of the activities. As a result, I did not feel the returns matched the time investment. Benchmarking it against other training programs I have done, I feel the same amount of personal progress could have been accomplished in about 3 sessions. I kept expecting each new block to bring something new and was disappointed when it brought more of the same. // Personally, I found the constant repetition of our case presentations to be uninspiring. I imagine others found this exercise useful, but I had expected IMPACT to be a workshop type environment where we would learn a set of diverse, widely-applicable skills. Instead, I find that after 30+ hours of program time I have little more than a polished presentation that was tailored to the liking of ~5 vocal faculty members. // I would suggest IMPACT consider one of these two changes: // Option 1: Keep the format as it is but change the marketing so that the program truly targets the people it serves. In my opinion this would be: / - Researchers who are very uncomfortable with public speaking and need practice / - Researchers who have little experience communicating with a wider audience / - Researchers who truly have a biomedical product they would like to market in the near future // Option 2: Diversify the training program / - Recruit a faculty that reflects the diversity of the fellows (this year's faculty was almost exclusively biomedical-focused) / - Incorporate a wider range of exercises (e.g., multiple presentations tailored to different types of audiences; presentations in a variety of formats (powerpoint, chalk talks, concept notes, casual pitches); extemporaneous speaking exercises; role playing; strategies for 'reading your audience'; identifying jargon and how to avoid it; etc.) // Finally, I would suggest training for the faculty. I do appreciate the time they put into IMPACT and several of them truly seemed to buy-in to the program. However, they lacked a shared vision, which lead to inconsistent and conflicting comments. I watched several fellows go around in circles. In the end, this became a slow spiral towards improvement, but the amount of progress did not reflect the amount of time they likely put into changing their presentations each week. // In the end, I want to reiterate that IMPACT fills an important gap in our usual training programs. I certainly hope it continues, but I feel the implementation could be changed to truly provide an impactful experience for the participants.

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Valuable experience.

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Could include a focus on career paths during a meeting session. The career panel touched on this, but talking about career paths with the IMPACT faculty in a group setting could be beneficial. Asking the tough questions: What do you want to do, How will you achieve that, What also

interests you if you don't get what you want initially? / / --It would have been nice to talk about the Science IDP career thing we filled out in a group setting (similar to the point above). / / -- Sometimes it wasn't clear when we were supposed to meet with our personal development advisor. And what we should get from them. / / --We did this in the beginning, but having people identify the critical gap in a problem or their field or research problem and then explaining why it is important to know this or solve the problem was super helpful. I wish this would have been reiterated over and over (maybe it was, but it changed my way of thinking about problems / research when I framed it in that context). / / --Group mentoring was really productive and helpful. / /

- I was not entirely sure what the IMPACT program would be like when I first arrived, but it proved to be a very timely program given the critical point I had reached in my career. When I first started the IMPACT program I was very uncertain about what I wanted to do with my future - I was aware of all my possible choices, but the sheer number of things that were possible was overwhelming. After completing the IMPACT program, I have found incredible clarity in what it is I want to do with my career throughout my whole life. I am appreciative of all the work that goes into organizing and facilitating this program and I would definitely recommend this program to future students to apply!

- Thanks for a great program. It was a great learning experience. I now have a clear view of what's the impactful portion of my project, as well as the holes in my project I need to address.

- It was a good program to focus on soft skills. The biggest area of improvement, I think, is to help train the fellows for the "cold-call" requests for interviews--especially for the more introverted people, it helps to have a well-developed plan in place to try and make a persuasive case that we are worth the stakeholder's time to open that network. / / I thoroughly enjoyed developing the case presentation. It may be helpful to help the fellows practice with timing a bit more strictly (that 30 sec. sign at the final presentation would have been wonderful to have for all of block 3). I actually felt like starting out and focusing on the impact statement slowed the development of a good case presentation; it seems like some people never really got away from that final slide that starts "my impact statement is..." -- the storyline, however, was a great tool to outline the thoughts. / / I think I underestimated the time commitment that occurs outside of the meetings, though, and at times that got a bit stressful when juggling the research life. / / Overall, I'm glad I did the program. Thank you for opening this opportunity to all of us.

- Overall I had a wonderful time and greatly appreciate the work and dedication that all the faculty and organizers have placed into the program. Through this experience, I feel that I can communicate the potential applications of my research to a lay audience, and this is something that I am often required to do when socializing or interacting with non-scientists. I think the only small addition that would have helped me, would have been greater emphasis on career development. I feel that many of us are still unsure what to do next or how to progress forward. I think allocating one or two classes to one-on-one sessions with faculty with the focus on career counseling would have been helpful. At the same time, I recognize that we have a very limited amount of time and that career development was not the main intent of the program. Thanks again.

The IMPACT program has been tremendous in helping me crystalize the impact of my research and in learning how to communicate my research to a general audience. The IMPACT program has given me the confidence to pitch my research as a venture idea and is the launchpad for my future endeavors. I would highly recommend the IMPACT program to all PhD students and postdocs!

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I really appreciate how positive everyone was throughout the IMPACT program. It was a diverse group with different interests & goals ---- & although many of those goals were in the clinical realm, people were open & enthusiastic about other areas.

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I am amazed by my experiences in the IMPACT Program! What a privilege to have a full room of smart people with varieties of expertise spending hours and hours trying to understand my research and to help me highlight its importance! All the conversations with faculty and peers in the past semester provided me with unprecedented perspectives to rethink about the logic, the plan and the impact of my project. The training not only gives me incredible clarity for my research, but also inspired me to think out of the box. We also got ample opportunities to practice professional communication and networking, with lots of support from the faculty.

2017A

Great program

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It was a great experience. I feel that we didn't really discuss careers within the group. In terms of the experience that was not a problem. However, after completing the survey, I wonder if that was a part of the programs intent.

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I really enjoyed this program, and I and my PI have noticed progress in myself because of it. I did think that it would've been nice to have more mentors and PDAs from the science/bench side of industry, it seemed heavy on those with the business or big picture outlook.

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I really learned a lot from the IMPACT Program and feel that I am now better prepared to craft nascent research ideas into research projects with real-world impact. Moreover, the skills I developed during the IMPACT Program will be applicable to my future endeavors well beyond just my IMPACT project so the IMPACT skill set will be with me throughout my career. / / Also, the career development aspect of the IMPACT Program was equally beneficial. I can't thank the program enough for pairing me with a professional development mentor because my mentor has been incredibly helpful as I begin thinking about post doctoral fellowships. / / Overall, I would highly recommend the IMPACT Program to other PhD students and postdocs.

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A wonderful experience!

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At the start of the program, I was a little concerned that my work wouldn't be a good fit. I'm doing a fairly physics-heavy project, while the rest of the cohort skews toward biomedical sciences. However, I found the environment to be both welcoming and engaging. The fellows, peer mentors, and faculty were all willing to provide guidance and feedback, which made this a

very rewarding experience. // I think the lessons I learned will be different from the other fellows. Due to the nature of my project, the feedback I received typically focused on developing a clear narrative, but didn't provide many technical suggestions. Instead, I learned to discuss my research with an audience outside my field. And I was surprised by how many assumptions I had made when preparing talks. Ultimately IMPACT helped me streamline my ideas, which will be valuable regardless of the audience. In the future, I would happily recommend the program to others in my field, as I think the diversity of expertise was uniquely helpful to me. // I'm very grateful for the patience and thoughtfulness of the peer mentors and faculty who helped us all improve.

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I liked the experience a lot. My only comment would be that at the beginning I felt a bit lost on what we were expected to do. /

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This is a wonderful program with wonderful people. I truly believe in the goals of this program and have tried to get my peers to participate as well. The skills I learned help me to convey my ideas in a more effective manner, and I find myself frequently applying these skills to all aspects of my personal and professional life.

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I found IMPACT very interesting experience, but I think it is too much focused in the research projects. In my opinion we put too much focus in the presentations and not that much in career development. I would improve it balancing more the career options and personal development areas. / Projects change over time, and we should be outstanding scientists no matter what are we currently working on. / / /

2017B

I would have wished for a stronger emphasize on the PDA.

I do truly appreciate all the work and dedication from the organizers, especially Deb Burstein.

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It was very empowering to see the progress of others and myself through this IMPACT session. I hope that IMPACT truly keeps in contact with their alumni as this network of people in IMPACT is so valuable!

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It was very valuable and productive time.

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I have a minor suggestion for improving the IMPACT experience - limiting the program to one semester would help with scheduling.

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This experience exceeded my expectations. I now think about my research as to how it impacts society and also the target points that anyone could understand. I am so happy that I spent four months participating and experiencing this program. I have seen a drastic change in how I approach my research. I believe this will help contribute to science more because I could communicate my research better and design the science in a better way to help society.

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Thank you very much for a great semester. I enjoyed attending the IMPACT sessions and work on my case. I found the feedback I received from faculty and peer mentors very helpful. THANK YOU!

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I had a wonderful time at the IMPACT program. This experience afforded me the opportunity to expand my network and advance several skills fundamental for my career development. I look forward to continuing in touch with faculty and my cohort. I am most thankful to have had the chance to work with Dr. Burstein, Dr. Gray and all the outstanding mentors at this program and hope to join them in the near future!

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The IMPACT program has truly been a transformative experience. I came in with an idea of what I wanted as a career and the ability only to communicate with others in my field. As part of the program, my skill at communicating to individuals outside my field was VASTLY improved. In addition, the sessions with different speakers, meeting a career development advisor, and expanding my network has opened up career possibilities and avenues I had not considered or otherwise would not have been aware of. Overall, I am grateful for being included in the program and I would recommend it to any senior PhD student or post-doc. There needs to be more programs like this!

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IMPACT helped jump start my professional network and made me realize how friendly and open strangers were to having a conversation about science. It also helped me to prepare a pitch that is understandable to a diverse audience, something that I never realized I was so severely lacking in.

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Course load felt heavy at times.

would have liked more invited speakers

would have been interesting to perhaps segregate group presentations by fellows interested in career in academia vs industry in order to tailor our presentations for those crowds.

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Great opportunity, slightly too long, I think the biggest improvement of the fellows was achieved in the first sessions and for the last panel, progress seemed to stagnate a little in the second half

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The intensive, iterative presentation-and-revision process was very helpful in clarifying my thinking and sharpening my ability to handle tough questions with aplomb. While I wasn't able to meet with any stakeholders during my time in the IMPACT program, I feel I now have the skills to manage stakeholder meetings well. Finally, because my area of expertise is in neither biotech nor engineering, I found the networking aspect of the program less helpful than other participants might, but there were still a lot of medical professionals associated with IMPACT who I may have interactions with in future. Regardless, any publicity is good publicity (as they say).

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I would not have spend so much time revising my impact statement and continuously getting feedback - assuming it would waste time. But I was amazed by obvious benefit felt by this process and the clarity of thought that came from revisiting it again and again along with constant peer/faculty feedback to help guide.

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Useful in overall grooming of your approaches and will benefit in long-term

2018A

I found the first few meetings very helpful and interesting. After the first few (2-3) I stopped feeling like I was getting things out of them. Generally the feedback I got was pretty positive and the changes I was making between meetings was pretty minimal.

After hearing the final presentations (which for the most part were pretty good), I think it might be valuable to spend one or two of the last sessions working on presentation skills. So perhaps keep improving the content but also introduce the topics of incorporating body language, stage presence, voice, etc. Tony Eng or the MIT Communication Lab could probably help with that if desired.

I really liked how many faculty advisors were in each meeting. Their comments were all really great and I liked interacting with them over the course of the semester.

I also really appreciated that there was a mix of schools and research areas represented. It made it very fun to meet / interact with the other fellows and hear what they were doing.

It was nice that dinner was provided but the food was really hit or miss. ./ sorry.

- IMPACT program is one of the best science community I have ever been in. I appreciate well-planned tasks, supportive mentors, and friendly culture of the program.

- IMPACT has helped me communicate my research to a broader audience. I have developed a better editorial sense of what message I want to convey to an audience and what message will actually benefit an audience.

My specific research trajectory was not changed, but I've had the opportunity to think about different career paths and what impact I want to have in the future.

- I had a great experience and was happy to meet the faculty members. All the faculty/mentors were extremely supportive and wanted to help as much as possible. Thank you to everyone who made this program possible.

- I enjoyed the program. It helped with my scientific communication and build my network.

- IMPACT was challenging for me, personally and professionally, but because of that I think I grew from it. It was difficult to use a proposal idea for the IMPACT program“ it might even be beneficial to split IMPACT into two program groups, one presenting results and the other for future work. I put a lot of pressure on myself and didn't feel that I always performed to the best of my abilities. The program also made me take a deeper look into my career goals, and made me prioritize professional development, which will still be a journey for me. I was able to gain

confidence to talk to other people outside of my current advisor for career mentorship. I wish that the career mentorship part came earlier in the program so we could benefit more from it.

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I had a great experience in IMPACT. I truly thought coming in that I had a reasonable grasp of scientific communication to diverse audiences, but it seems that was just surrounding jargon rather than re-framing entire concepts. I also learned to think more "linearly" about the process of motivating a research project, in which the thinking process begins at the social or health problem and leads from there towards the biological method(s).

My only main complaint is that I felt like there were diminishing returns in the later weeks -- my presentation kept improving in small ways, but I felt that they were improvements that mattered for this specific presentation type/length/audience rather than generalizable insights as I had gotten from the first sessions. As far as how this could be acted on -- 1) maybe the program could be shortened by a few weeks, or 2) maybe a couple of the middle/later weeks could be spent taking the knowledge gained and trying a rapid test of the methodology on an entirely new topic (fellows switch topics and try to come up with a pitch, or even be given an entirely new set of topics and have to come up with a strong storyline for that new topic to practice the methodology).

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IMPACT was helpful in helping me concisely and briefly explain my science to a broad or focused audience. In addition, it helped me connect with mentors outside of my lab network, which is useful as I develop my career.

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professionals from so many diverse areas and receive their thoughtful feedback. It gave me a much better understanding of how to explain my work to different audiences and also the kinds of questions and assumptions different people may have.

Personally, I think I would prefer more detailed instructions and / or a better idea of the goals of each activity we did. Often I wasn't sure precisely what I should be trying to achieve with a particular exercise, or what the specific intended audience was for my work.

I also wish I made more progress with the career development side of IMPACT. I didn't find the IDP as useful as I had hoped, partially because I wasn't sure quite what to do with it. I had one Skype meeting with my PDA, but they had no idea why we had been paired or what we should discuss. It was still a fairly helpful chat, but I think some more guidance to the fellows or the PDAs would help.

Lastly, the camaraderie with other fellows was fantastic. A lot of the time post-docs (like myself) are not very communicative about their career-related questions, plans, and anxieties. I had some nice career-related discussions with other fellows during IMPACT.

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I am very grateful to have been a part of the IMPACT program. The experience was wonderful...the learning experience is intensive and immersive and I learned a great deal and loved the feedback I received each week, as it challenged me to reflect very deeply about my research questions. It was profoundly challenging to incorporate feedback and to work on the necessary concepts in order to better motivate the work and description of the work, but in the

best possible sense of challenging...as it improved all aspects of my research. It was incredibly rewarding to make small steps to improve each week and to then arrive at the final presentation with a far different approach than I started with. By that time I had also observed that IMPACT was improving my writing in relation to work on grants and manuscripts, which was extremely helpful and forever appreciated! The faculty and peer mentors were all extremely kind and generous and always tried their utmost to provide helpful feedback- I found that aspect amazing - the level of investment was truly remarkable and I am so grateful. Sometimes it was difficult to realize that you hadn't achieved the level of discourse that you had thought you did while preparing, and so this aspect was very important to go through as the responses and questions forced you to think and delve into asking why your work is important and to ask whether the questions you are asking are the most important/relevant scientifically - this was immeasurably valuable to go through. I appreciated the time taken by everyone involved so very much, and that IMPACT allows a unique opportunity to reflect upon scientific and professional development/career pathways and to put these aspects into action. Thank you!

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IMPACT was amazing. Having to routinely reiterate my research to an audience genuinely interested in my development helped me write grant applications, my dissertation prospectus, and discuss my work with people outside of my field. It helped me further develop my logic and my communication skills. Plus, my PowerPoints improved immensely--thanks for teaching us about active titles!

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I really appreciate the opportunity to get lots of unbiased feedback from such a diverse range of experts! It's a very healthy and constructive environment that encourages people to challenge their assumptions and do more focused and better work.

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Overall, I'm very happy with the experience and I feel like I learned a lot during the weekly sessions. The connections with professional development advisors will be very valuable to me in the future. Also, I appreciated hearing feedback from the diverse IMPACT faculty that were at the sessions.

The one comment I would make regarding potential changes to the program is that I feel like there may have been diminishing returns with the number of sessions. Of course, some projects were much more developed than others, so I think that others may have found the number of sessions appropriate. But, for myself, I had a relatively well-developed idea from my research so I found some of the middle sessions to not be as useful.

2018B

I believe there was a mismatch of expectations, which led me to not enjoy IMPACT at all. From what I was told through the interviews and information on the website, I thought the program would help me be more introspective and evaluate what I wanted to do with my future career. Instead, the program was very focused on the presentation aspect (and nothing else). As I am already confident in my presentation skills, I found the sessions to be largely unhelpful, as I did not learn anything novel that could help me with my career. Furthermore, I found the style of critique among the faculty mentors to be largely negative. While some faculty members did

provide good constructive feedback, they were overshadowed by the few faculty who provided feedback (to myself and other trainees) in a very harsh manner that I found borderline bullying. I was also offended by some of the feedback that was focused on the technical/conceptual aspects of the projects (rather than the presentation aspect), especially when the feedback came from individuals who were not even in the fields of research that was being presented. I ended up dreading IMPACT every week because it would be the same thing over and over again - I would present my slides, get torn down with no actual constructive feedback, and leave the session with lower self-esteem (when I already struggle with depression and anxiety to start with). While I think IMPACT can have value to some people who wish to improve their presentation skills, I think there needs to be clarification of what this program actually is - instead of the career introspection that I had expected, it was only focused on the presentation aspects.

The faculty members also need to improve their "bedside manner" and provide feedback in a constructive, rather than solely negative, manner. With conversations I've had with trainees, I know I am not the only one who feels as such. I think IMPACT is overall a great idea - there are just current flaws in the execution of the program. On a more positive note, I found the peer mentors quite positive and friendly. One of the PDAs that I met was also helpful, although I don't think I needed IMPACT (and all the sessions) to make that connection useful. The food provided at each session was top notch and my favorite part of the whole program.

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I found IMPACT to be a well organized and engaging but ultimately confusing endeavor. It seemed like our instructions as fellows did not match those given to the faculty. While the content of our work was supposed to be the focus, the physical delivery of that content definitely skewed mentors' opinions of individuals. I found it frustrating that mentors would claim to be coming from a logical standpoint, when in fact they were influenced by inherent biases about tone of voice and composure of the speaker, just like any normal person would. Because of that, I think IMPACT needs to admit in its marketing that this also a presentation skills workshop -- because half of showing a stakeholder your impact is in the way you present that information, not *just* the logical flow. We are kidding ourselves if we think otherwise. The final presentations were improved from the first week certainly because each person thought critically about the logic of their work. But they were EXCELLENT because the mumblers spoke up, because the difficult concepts to grasp via storyline were made accessible via pictures, and so on. Those are presentation skills. Finally, I think the idea of writing out storylines, statements, and cases is great. I really learned a lot about the backbones of my project by doing those exercises and it made me think critically about what I'm doing. However, iterating each of them sporadically, to me, is too many things at once. An explanation that works in a storyline will not easily translate to a case, for example. Add this formatting confusion with the "too many cooks in the kitchen" model of 10 faculty grilling you in front of your peers, it leads to over-editing documents that could have been ok. I think a simple solution is to have fewer faculty present during the larger group meetings (the one-on-ones and small groups are fine), and to focus on storylines for the first half and cases for the second half. I also think that we could cut the number of sessions in half and have more intimate, longer-form conversations. I had "IMPACT fatigue" going into November and many of my peers did too.

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I am really appreciative of all of the mentors for their time, input, and encouragement. I feel more confident having conversations about my work with people outside of my field.

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I thought the IMPACT program was helpful in improving how I talk about my research to a diverse audience. I thought the general ideas about identifying stakeholders, speaking, and professional development advisers were helpful. My biggest negative was the structure of the program. A lot of the time in weekly sessions was spent listening to presentations, which I thought was not the best use of time. I would have liked to have more seminars on career development topics (speaking, networking, etc.). I think a lot of the feedback about presentations was just as useful when it was given through email or telephone outside of class.

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I found especially productive the one-to-one discussions with the faculty members as it allowed me to understand what part of my presentation was unclear and work consistently on that specific missing point rather than the more random suggestions that came out of the whole room when open presentations were given.

I found having to think about the impact of my work in preparing assignments every week the most useful. It was difficult but very useful. Towards the end of the program I felt like the sessions turned into how to present things better, so the last few sessions some of which I didn't attend didn't feel that useful. This might be specific to me as I didn't meet with stakeholders, so I might have ended up repeating the same thing without adding content. I also remember feeling lost many times during the program though I don't remember now why. Finally, again this might be just me but I didn't develop any strong relationship with the mentors or the mentees. That is something I was expecting/hoping would happen.

•

I appreciate the value of IMPACT, but I don't feel that my goals for the program were fully met. I am currently on the academic job market, and I sought an audience to present the vision for my future research program. The IMPACT approach forced me to focus on a subset of my proposed research, which provided some value for that particular project but left me feeling extremely constrained. I believe this approach also led to a number of unhelpful comments from faculty mentors. In particular, the single-project-based approach meant that several faculty members did not have an opportunity to view the context / broader vision of my program, which led to assumptions about what kind of research I conduct and the focus/strategic planning of my work. I had the option of catering to these faculty upon realizing what they wanted me to provide in the context of the IMPACT program, but that ultimately meant spending significant time and effort to present ideas that were not relevant to my work or career prospects outside of the IMPACT program.

•

While I was warned that it is harder to use a proposal than your actual work/project, I wasn't aware how much harder it would be. Unless the proposal has preliminary data or is part of an ongoing application, I do not recommend that participants use proposals. I would've gained far more from this experience by using my dissertation work rather than using a proposal. In general, I felt there was a mismatch between instructions given to the cohort and the expectations mentors have. For example, the very first case the cohort was told to use just words. It was unclear that this was a presentation (why would you give a presentation if you didn't have story?) and feedback from mentors was often about the style and not content. It felt counterproductive and demoralizing. Of all the IMPACT sessions, I left on a positive note 3 times (one of which was the final session). Rarely did I feel empowered, encouraged, or that I was becoming a better communicator. Often criticism had no objective; at the end of the night, I would have to find

some theme amongst the criticism so I could have a strategy to avoid such abuse the following week. At the end of one feedback session, the faculty mentors apologized for "beating me up so much". My response was that I was used to it since it happened every week. I realize that not everyone gives constructive feedback, but it often felt like a dog-pile. Am I just supposed to be silent and take it because I can't get a word in edge-wise? Or ask questions about why they're so confused (which is also hard if you can't get a word in edge-wise)? Or try to justify/explain choices that were made so that there could be a discussion (which often comes off as defensive and seems counter-productive)?

There were individuals who gave constructive criticism and made me feel like I was making progress. In particular a big thank you to Lisa Freed, Jess Tytell, and Roger Tung. I think the IMPACT program is too long. It is impossible to please everyone and with so many different viewpoints and so many sessions, I updated my presentation every week only to have a final version very similar to my first draft in September. My peer mentor and my professional development advisor are both amazing. My PDA is the highlight of the program.

-

My case was evolved over the IMPACT sessions, such as details to include and exclude in my background, narrowing from general applications to one important application, and generating a new hypothesis. Every mentor tried very hard to help make my case become a stronger case.

-

It was an excellent experience, and I continue to reap dividends as I progress and apply the many pieces of wisdom provided.

2019A

I'm very pleased with the input and output that the Impact Program facilitates. All mentors were tremendously helpful when providing feedback despite inexperience in specific fields of study. Because of their feedback, I modified my presentation format and style for both the program and my research institution. I was very thankful for the networking opportunities and this program gave me an excuse to reach out to stakeholders without feeling like I was wasting their time. I look forward to keeping a correspondence with the Impact Fellows and have already taken steps to begin future networking events.

-

It has improved my ability to effectively communicate my research in both presentation and network format. Effect on career development was substantial. Effect on career path/direction was less effective, although it was partly because I changed my direction from academia to industry midway.

-

I had a really great time doing IMPACT this year! All of the input from the faculty each week was really helpful, and I really appreciated how direct everyone was about what they did not understand. I also appreciated seeing feedback that was given to others, which helped me think about how I was structuring my own presentations.

One suggestion for next semester would be to focus more on visuals for presentations. We spent a lot of time on storylines, and on presentations with placeholder visuals, but since the final

output is only the presentation, I think focusing more on building helpful visuals would be really useful.

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I think that impact program is really well organized. Their methodology of continuous contact of the fellow with mentors are really helpful to improve in our professional carriers.

-

Overall this was a great experience. I appreciated the commitment by the faculty to engage during the sessions, but also to donate so much of their time outside of the sessions. One of the most helpful sessions however was when we met in small groups with other IMPACT fellows to work on our storylines. It might be nice to move that forward in the calendar because it's a less stressful way to get feedback. The feedback from the faculty was very helpful, but sometimes it felt like it could have been presented in a more kind way. Instead of saying "I don't know why you would include that, that makes no sense" for example, you could say "It's not clear to me the purpose in this point, can you explain why you included that?" All participants in IMPACT were there because they wanted to improve, so sometimes the comments from faculty felt unnecessarily aggressive and accusatory. I think Martha Grey did a great job providing constructive feedback without making you feel personally attacked.

-

I found some sessions to be really helpful and others not as much. The ones that were most helpful were those in which we split up into 2 faculty/1 fellow groups, received feedback and modified our talks, then met with a second group during the same session. This allowed me to test out new ideas quickly rather than having to wait a full week. It was also fast paced and more exciting. The time flew by.

The problem I see with the larger groups is that, because I submit my presentation ahead of time, I am basically "stuck" with it, even though I often observe others' presentations and would like to incorporate their methods/feedback. I think a beneficial change to the program would be to allow fellows to modify their own presentations after observing critiques of their peers' talks.

-

The IMPACT program has been a really wonderful experience for me. It helps me expand my knowledge and have a better and bigger picture of my project. This leads to a better time management as I prioritize goals that are most important and are most applicable down the road. I also learned a lot from the career panel and made new friends and connections during our social networking events. I also get to know many wonderful mentors and fellows whom I hope to continue to learn from in the future. Thank you!

2019B

I think it was overall useful, but perhaps a month too long. At the end, it started to decrease in utility for the amount of time spent.

-

I deeply appreciated all the time IMPACT mentors, faculty put in. They not only asked critical questions, they also referred me to several stakeholders, informed me with several ideas, offered me help for my presentation.

The week by week experience went like this: I tried, I got more confused, and I tried again, and

got even more confused. I was never certain what the goal of my project should be, since all the questions people asked were valid, and I failed to find a concrete answer. Nevertheless, this process helped me think. I'm confident that I now have a better understanding of how my project may make impact.

One thing I learned the most from IMPACT is "meeting with your stakeholder." It gives me more courage to contact people I may not know. It is useful in research, but it is also useful for informational interview! I will work on sending emails to people I might want to work with in the future for a 15-20-minute chat.

Last but not least, I made great friends with the fellows, mentors, and faculty. I really thank all their support.

-

IMPACT really pushed me to think about my research in more depth. The program helped me to convey my ideas and thoughts on my research in a clear and concise manner. In particular, I was impressed my cohort and motivated by the faculty mentors who asked questions that changed the way I think about my research.

-

It was a good experience!

I liked how we gradually went from the statement to the story line to the case. I realized that I was more able to understand someone else's storyline and provide feedback when I sat down and read his/her storyline at my own pace rather than listening to the fellow read his/her storyline (rather quickly) and then providing feedback. It is very likely that this situation may not have been felt by everyone. I was then thinking that if I know which group I will end up being for the coming class, I could read a few storylines of the different students ahead of time (like between noon and 5:00 pm on Tuesday). That way, I would be more apt to provide useful feedback.

-

Overall it was a good experience. I did at times feel a bit less connected to the general sentiment of "Impact" because of how basic-science my research question is. With that being said, I still feel as though Impact helped me really improve and hone-in on my skills at presenting to more general audiences.

-

It was an amazing opportunity to critically assess what my true research objective was and the direct impact of my current work, not just the broader implications. I think this will ultimately be one of the most important skills that will support me as I move forward, to clearly convey exactly what I'm doing to potential collaborators and funders. I also think that the candidness with which the faculty mentors provided feedback was essential to the amount of the progress I made during the program.

-

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I wish we could have some sessions to practice communication in a more general sense. It got very repetitive to talk about our projects each week so it would have been fun to mix it up and practice presenting something else, ex. explain something else technical in detail.

Also, I was connected with two PDAs who either didn't respond, or responded once and then dropped off.

I wish I had been able to see everyone's presentation as we switched groups. I saw a lot of the same ones over and over but others I didn't see until the final.

-

As intensive as the IMPACT program is, I learned a lot from the program.

I learned not just from the mentors, but also other IMPACT fellows on how to clearly express your research question and how to identify the immediate/direct impact of the findings. I learn how to identify the implication for research.

I see the IMPACT methodology as a useful tool throughout the full circle of a project i.e. from the proposal to manuscript publication.

2019B

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I see the IMPACT methodology as a useful tool throughout the full circle of a project i.e. from the proposal to manuscript publication.

2019US

Overall I think the IMPACT program is a useful workshop that more people should experience. However, I do have three suggestions:

1) Before the first meeting, it would have been very helpful to have had more good and bad examples of what "the problem" is. About two or three sessions in, Deb showed us a few examples discussing heart disease and what was too many details vs too vague. I found this to be very useful and I would have liked to have had this at the beginning.

2) Instead of doing two in-person workshops and meeting several times over a month, it might be more efficient to have made this an intensive week-long workshop.

- Impact has changed my thought process when reading a publication, creating a presentation, or observing a presentation. I now have specific questions that I ask myself: what is the problem and is it clearly stated? who is being affected by this problem? what is the impact?

By focusing on these questions, I have learned to emphasize the key points of my project and what to listen for when other individuals are presenting to ensure I understand them.

- I truly appreciate the time learning how to speak about my project in a concise matter. I have used what I learned multiple times since the program has ended already.

- Overall I think the program was useful in finding a way to describe my project to a diverse audience including those without any specific background knowledge. At times there would be disagreement among faculty regarding the next steps to take which sometimes impeded progress and clouded the message. In addition, some faculty would make a suggestion that would be incorporated into the presentation only for someone else or the same faculty member to disagree with the change. This back and forth slowed progression.

2020A

An absolutely wonderful opportunity that challenged me to think about my work in a new way and helped me reconsider and better focus my career plans.

- The IMPACT 2020 has been one of the best experiences at MIT. I am grateful to all IMPACT 2020 organizers for this wonderful experience even during a pandemic. All Faculty and Peer mentors were always eager to provide feedback and encouragement on the research. Deb's and Ester's encouragement and engagement with me was not only at the mentoring sessions but also throughout emails and when necessary, even over zoom. Deb's enthusiasm for the program and everyone's research is contagious. To all Faculty and Peer mentors, I applaud for providing

feedback, sharing their experiences, and donating their time to help us in our research and career development. They were generous with their time and providing guidance. I learned so much professionally, and, I had the opportunity to get inspired by their personalities. Learning from such accomplished scientists was a wonderful privilege.

•

My experience in the IMPACT program was very productive and constructive.

The program has great mentors, and they give the best of them when helping you build the impact for your ideas.

•

I really enjoyed my time in this program and am grateful for the experiences I shared with my cohort and the relationships that I developed along the way. I appreciated the open and supportive environment, which gave me a chance to grow in new ways. All of the faculty have a special way of being able to give you feedback in a constructive way while also remaining supportive, something that I have not seen often during my time in grad school so far. I was especially grateful for this, as I feel it's what contributed so much to my growth and success in the program.

•

I really appreciate all of the hard work from the faculty and mentors. My project came a long way from the start of the program. By the end, the program began to feel very repetitive, as each week we were repeatedly updating the same short presentation. I felt as if the program could have ended a month earlier than it did. I also wonder if additional guest speakers like Joel could be brought in to discuss other aspects of professional development, or if some of the faculty and mentors might give short IMPACT-style presentations about their work. That said, I got a lot out of this program, and I'm so thankful that we were able to continue virtually during the pandemic. Deb and Martha's commitment to the fellows was clear and I want to express my gratitude.

•

Overall, I learned a lot through the IMPACT program. I feel that the transition from in-person to virtual meeting was smooth and did not interfere with the learning process. I also really appreciated Deb reaching out to help with the storyline and case throughout this process!

•

I really enjoyed being a part of IMPACT community. Even though we had to do our classes online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our sessions remained dynamic and very fruitful. The progress we made during the semester was really motivating and I will certainly use what I learnt in IMPACT in my career. I am really thankful of all faculty and mentors especially Deb and Martha for their dedication and support throughout the semester.

Also, I think I had the opportunity to make a very good connection with the faculty, peer mentors, and other fellows despite the online nature of the course. I do hope, of course, that I will be able to meet the fellows and faculty/mentors in future in-person gatherings.

•

It really helped put a framework for my project together, but I feel like a lot of it was redundant. I wish there were more technical skills taught for professional development (e.g. more than one talk for networking with stakeholders).

2020B

Overall, I had a very positive experience from IMPACT. I was pushed to think about different ways to talk about my research. I also had the privilege to hear about many innovative works. I connected with many people from various walks of life and received helpful advice to make informed decisions for my future career path. I was challenged to seek out, connect and speak to stakeholders, something that I had never done and did not know that I was capable of doing considering my reserved personality. In retrospect, my experience in IMPACT was truly remarkable and will remain a treasured memory.

-

I thank all the faculty for their time they spend for the program. It was a necessary training for me to re-think about my research and future directions of my research and career. The experience would have been much richer if we didn't have to be completely remote due to COVID-19 restrictions. Hopefully I can meet in person with other fellows and faculty in the future.

-

I loved the program. I have the confidence to explain my future projects in simpler terms to any target audience.

-

I learned a great deal about the intricacies of presentation in front of a broader audience. I learned to pay attention to details that I had not previously considered.

Most notably, I benefited greatly from the PDA mentors that I got connected with. These individuals gave me such valuable advice at a career juncture that I needed it the most. That on its own will make a lasting mark on my career.

I also enjoyed the career panel. I wish we could have that event in person, but still I learned new information about career options that I had not previously considered.

Lastly, this program did not feel like a didactic one but rather a supportive family where learning and improvement came through sharing. Specially, the care and attention that Deb provided in supporting us into the evenings and over the weekends was so generous and so kind.

-

It has been incredible. I've met some amazing people and got a chance to get such wonderful feedback on how I see my research. The amount of effort the mentors put in is so clear. I probably stumbled a lot along the way and it was hard but I think it pushed me to rethink how applications of research are not just demonstrations for a paper but can be a real pathway to change.

-

I had a good experience, however I think it could have been better if people were appreciating your effort more. The atmosphere is a little intense!

-

The IMPACT program definitely has helped me with looking deeper into my research work and the reasons behind why what I do matters and how it changes lives. It has also helped me with being able to describe my research in fewer, more meaningful words that are easy to comprehend by the general public. After all, as Albert Einstein says: 'If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough'. This program guided us to understand our work even more.

2021A

I found that it was somewhat helpful but I didn't have enough time to fully invest in the making a better end product.

-

Puzzled, struggled, confused, explored, arrived, and look forward.

-

IMPACT is a fantastic initiative. Sometimes during the program, I was stressed and talking to stakeholders was stressful at first. But it was so worth it. I have learned a ton, I enjoyed it a lot, and expanded my network. Overall, IMPACT really gives its participants new tools that will be useful throughout their careers. Thank you!

-

IMPACT has really helped me clarify my research goals, define the problem I am trying to solve in a methodical way, and develop a clear path for my future directions.

Prompt 2 (added 2018): In a few words or sentences, can you describe the specific effect on the research due to the IMPACT approach?

2018A

Early on, I found it very helpful to receive feedback from the faculty and peer mentors during the group sessions. It was helpful to hear what areas were common knowledge and what required more explanation or supporting information.

However, over the course of the program I began to doubt my future career aspirations. Meeting with my PDAs and people they put me in contact with was deeply valuable but also raised a lot of (valid) questions about what I wanted to do, what was feasible, where I'd do the research, etc. Unfortunately, these questions were raised but I haven't found answers (yet) so right now, as a result, I'm feeling a lot of uncertainty about what research I want to do, whether the project I proposed is really of value, and what my near and long-term career goals are. But even though that kind of sucks right now, I do think it's overall a good thing that those questions were raised and that I'm thinking about that stuff.

-

IMPACT has helped me communicate my research to a broader audience. I have developed a better editorial sense of what message I want to convey to an audience and what message will actually benefit an audience.

My specific research trajectory was not changed as I am toward the end of my PhD, but I've had the opportunity to think about different career paths.

-

I've heard this statement float around a lot during my PhD: "You don't really know your research unless you can explain it to your grandma." I think IMPACT really forced this upon me and made me think about how I was describing my research. Communication is key in science and having an effective way to describe what I do on a daily basis to anyone is essential. I believe the IMPACT program helped me focus on the important aspects without the unnecessary detail. This is an important skill I will use in my future presentations and writing.

- The IMPACT program helped clarify my research goals and focus on the big picture concepts.

- The IMPACT approach is incredibly useful in developing new, and sustainable, research ideas, and for directing your current research. By looking for the broader picture, we are able to best determine the holes in knowledge and steps we need to take to get to the long term goal. What we learned was how to strategize our approach to research.

- IMPACT enabled me to better communicate my research with broader community and identify the field specific knowledge I took for granted. It helped me think more fundamentally evaluate my thinking process and be able to make a case without distractive details.

- I decided to collect more and different data to make a more convincing argument for the usefulness of the technology I am developing to my stakeholders.

I also realized I need to take time to really think about and flesh out how the technology I am developing can best impact healthcare (the implicit goal). This is on-going...

- IMPACT enabled me to more specifically identify the most relevant research questions relating to my work and to better address why these questions are important.

- IMPACT changed how I frame my work-both for people within my discipline and external audiences. It helped me better communicate my work and theory to the audience. It helped me better weave a story.

- Helping me learn how to prioritize and question assumptions has been the best way IMPACT has helped.

- My proposed application was not well considered, and IMPACT helped evaluate options using the metric of impact, to pick something just as feasible but more impactful.

- The impact program helped me learn how to craft effective storylines that have translated into NIH specific aims and proposals and I have started teaching my students similar approaches.

2018B

The way that I introduced the work shifted, which ultimately changed focus of future parts of the project.

- Helping me better understand how to present my research.

- I learned the importance of giving a simpler message to be credible and powerful when communicating my research. This has help me in writing grants, preparing presentations and prioritizing different my collaborations.

The IMPACT approach encouraged me to spend more effort understanding the state-of-the-art technology and identifying the competitive advantages that would emerge from my proposed research.

-

My IMPACT project was for a proposal that was submitted early within the program. My case was evolved over the IMPACT sessions, such as details to include and exclude in my background, narrowing from general applications to one important application, and generating a new hypothesis. Every mentor tried very hard to help make my case become a stronger case.

-

It has made my research efforts more focused on solving problems in the real world.

2019A

Specifically, I changed how I introduced my project to a new audience as well as the motivation for my research. This was done due to advice from Impact mentors and stakeholders. These changes were implemented in research presentations outside of the Impact program.

-

Design experiments to be more oriented to stakeholders.

-

IMPACT helped improve my ability to explain my research. Presenting to a broad technical audience helped me become more aware of assumptions or oversights I was making about my audience's knowledge when giving a talk. This awareness which helped me tailor my presentation and explain my research impact more clearly to my audience.

-

I think the IMPACT program showed me a way to think through obstacles in my research and while I don't have the exact solutions yet, I feel motivated that there is a clear path forward. One of the best things about the program was to provide an outlet for intellectual discussion and debate about a variety of scientific topics, particularly while I am in a temporary but rather repressive/difficult work environment. I really looked forward to the IMPACT meetings- they helped remind me how interesting and fun science and research can be.

-

Impact program helped me to define the limits of my project. Applying all of these methodology I was able to identify the novelty of my project, which will be the one that is going to have impact.

-

There are many ways to tell a story. There are good ways - and there are good and precise ways. IMPACT challenged my research formulation skills and gave me the tools to improve them now and in the long term. These tools are invaluable. Much more than this, I learned how to reality-check my research, think about career paths in broader terms than I had done before, and most of all, meet a truly fantastic group of mentors and peers. Thank you!

-

It helped me be able to thoroughly understand and justify my methodology. It also helped me think directly about what the question I was tackling specifically was and what my next research projects could be upon completion.

-

It shifted the way I explained the problem to others, i.e. the emphasis or importance of the problem changed. Also, it broadened the significance of my project.

-

My research was impacted in the way I prioritize the problems and the experiments to address them. This helps me to have a clearer picture of the goal of my project and to focus first on those that are most important.

-

Since my IMPACT research presentation is for a future project, my current research was not impacted due to IMPACT.

2019B

As a result of my participation in the IMPACT program, I learned about other presentation strategies for my research.

-

I learned how to reset my assumptions in my research throughout weekly meetings with IMPACT faculty and the meetings with stakeholders. This led me to take a different view of my research in the context of real work impact and help me communicate more efficiently with people outside of my research field.

-

I understood how to talk to stakeholders and feed their input without any bias into the project. In my research, safety and security are the key. Impact allowed me to focus on them more than what I did earlier.

-

Working in an engineering lab I have been receiving feedback on my project from the lens of the fellow engineers. Through the course of IMPACT I interacted with mentors that are medically focused doctors or industry leaders and their unique perspectives enabled me to see how the assumptions or deliverable of the project could be revisited to make the research approach more solid and the final impact broader.

-

I believe I will take a more broad approach in this early stage but then hone in on one application I think I was jumping too much to the application too early, but impact caused me to critically think about that pathway, other potential solutions and assess feasibility. It made me more honest with myself

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My research was not impacted by the program, but the way I look at pieces of data I have has been impacted and also the way I read papers has changed. Since the program has ended, I noticed that I look for the impacts in things more than just doing them because they treat a disease.

2019US

Overall, the greatest effect is how I talk about my work to a non-technical audience. The direction of my research didn't change, just the method I use to present it.

-

Impact has helped me to clarify my research objectives to a broad audience. They have worked with me on realizing what information is absolutely necessary for explaining a project versus what is more technical.

2020A

Prior to joining the IMPACT program, I have worked on this research for some time and I was not happy with my progress. With faculty, peer mentor's help, feedback, enormous support, guidance, and expertise, I have learned how to go from a draft to building a strong case for research and making an impact. It has taught me to look and think about my research differently. At first, talking to stakeholders felt daunting, but with each new round it got easier, in the end, I managed to speak to 10 different stakeholders. The Faculty and peer mentors and fellows' perspective and feedback taught me a lot about communicating and visualizing clearly a research case. But also, having the opportunity to provide feedback to other fellows trained me to look at other fellows' research for which I don't have the expertise and ask questions not from the perspective of what I know about that topic, but from the perspective that could help and guide other fellows to make their case stronger.

-

In a way they taught me how to think outside the box. Is difficult to think that way when you are surrounded by people that in a way understand your research. I learned how to have a different approach to my hypothesis and questions, and think further about what is needed from my research in order to have a better and larger impact.

-

I was able to learn how my research could be approached from different perspectives and how the storyline would change depending on who the specific stakeholder was. This was helpful in figuring out how to navigate my next steps and where I wanted to focus my time instead of always trying to include everything.

-

IMPACT changed the way I think about the problems I'm trying to solve with my research. Before IMPACT, I thought my work was very exploratory and found it difficult to imagine the impact my work my have in science and beyond. IMPACT helped me find where my project fits and where it will make a change.

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The IMPACT approach has helped me to identify and focus on the problem that is relevant and specific to my research and to lay out the individual steps to address the problem.

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I learnt how to better define the problem and identify potential flaws in my approach for defining the problem and hence addressing it.

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Breaking down my research using the Storyline template really helped provide a framework for a narrative.

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Focusing on how to communicate my project in the program really helped me refine my thesis objectives.

2020B

As a result of my participation in the IMPACT program, I learned about other presentation strategies for my research.

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I learned how to reset my assumptions in my research throughout weekly meetings with IMPACT faculty and the meetings with stakeholders. This led me to take a different view of my research in the context of real work impact and help me communicate more efficiently with people outside of my research field.

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I understood how to talk to stakeholders and feed their input without any bias into the project. In my research, safety and security are the key. Impact allowed me to focus on them more than what I did earlier.

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Working in an engineering lab I have been receiving feedback on my project from the lens of the fellow engineers. Through the course of IMPACT I interacted with mentors that are medically focused doctors or industry leaders and their unique perspectives enabled me to see how the assumptions or deliverable of the project could be revisited to make the research approach more solid and the final impact broader.

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I believe I will take a more broad approach in this early stage but then hone in on one application I think I was jumping too much to the application too early, but impact caused me to critically think about that pathway, other potential solutions and assess feasibility. It made me more honest with myself.

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My research was not impacted by the program, but the way I look at pieces of data I have has been impacted and also the way I read papers has changed. Since the program has ended, I noticed that I look for the impacts in things more than just doing them because they treat a disease.

2021A

Made me think more about having a goal application in mind for the basic research I am currently conducting.

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I have always known that research story telling should follow a hourglass shape - start with a general question, narrow down to a research problem, then end with a broad impact. However, the IMPACT program is the first time that I seriously sculpture my research story into this shape. The result is not just one story or one narration, it helps me to rethink about developing research projects, planning for long-term research goals and future career.

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Being forced to ask the often uncomfortable question of what the real impact of my research is and whom it actually affects has profoundly changed how I think about my research and how I choose problems. By talking to stakeholders ad-hoc assumptions about why my research is worth it are revealed and gaps in the argumentation laid bare. This has been a tremendous learning experience.

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Prior to IMPACT I wasn't sure the logistical steps required to translate my project to the clinical realm, but meeting with the IMPACT team, my PDAs, and my stakeholders help to form a clear pipeline for translation.