University Initiatives
Pilot Social Impact Assessment Project
Spring 2006
Draft Proposal
Rationale

Arizona State University is pursuing the task of measuring social impact as part of its larger goal of becoming a more socially embedded institution. The concept of measuring social impact is not necessarily new, although it has yet to be perfected. Charitable foundations, public entities, and others have been measuring the social impact of their pursuits for several years with varying degrees of success. Some universities have also tried to develop a means by which to measure the impact of their outreach programs. Since no one particular entity has mastered this craft, ASU is able to enter into this field of study and take the most successful elements of other programs and see how they can be applied to ASU’s goals. Considering the vast contributions of time, money, and resources invested in the university every year, it is tremendously important to not only understand how and where that investment is being applied but also to understand whether or not it is achieving the impact in the community that ASU and its stakeholders desire.

Options we have explored

The Office of University Initiatives (UI) has examined the work on social impact assessment from a variety of sources including examples from other universities, charitable foundations, and public entities. After a thorough review of the methodology used by other universities such as Harvard, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Michigan, UI initially decided to use logic models to evaluate programs’ resources and outputs. However, after consulting with Dr. Dennis Hoffman, W.P. Carey School of Business Associate Dean, Research and Doctoral Programs and Professor of Economics, about the practicality of assessing programs with the logic models, UI decided to use logic models as schematics to identify program pieces rather than as an impact assessment tool. In order to actually assess programs, UI has used its examination of several charitable foundations’ work as a model to structure its system of metrics. UI will assist ASU programs to identify data they can develop by themselves as well as identify existing data being collected by outside organizations which can be used for the assessment of the program.

The Pilot Social Impact Assessment Project

During the spring semester of 2006, UI proposes to work with two or three programs involved in ASU in the Community to begin measuring the programs’ social impact. UI has chosen to limit its involvement to two or three programs this semester to allow for close interaction with the programs while developing a social impact assessment workbook/curriculum. Development of the workbook is the key effort this semester and selecting a small number of programs offers UI a chance to see the workbook in action.
while being able to assist with program consultation. In addition, through the pilot project, UI is able to work with programs that have expressed a desire to evaluate their social impact and have the time and resources available to do so.

UI has selected to work with the Escalante Health Center to assess social impact in the coming semester. The Escalante Health Center operates a clinic providing free medical services to people in need. ASU students gain practical nursing experience by working at the clinic. The Health Center is a good fit for evaluation because it is a year round project with easily identifiable results that can be measured in both short term and long term formats. The Health Center can produce tangible results by the end of the semester, but still offer UI insight on how to develop results on a long term basis.

UI will also select one or two additional programs to partner with during the pilot project.

**UI’s Goals for Social Impact Assessment**

Since social impact assessment is a growing and developing project, UI intends to use the pilot program as a method of learning effective ways to assess impact. UI’s goal for these pilot programs is to assist them in developing a series of metrics that will effectively assess the outcomes of the programs’ work. The programs should be fairly self-sufficient in sustaining their own social impact assessment by the end of the semester.

Ultimately, UI hopes to use the materials developed from this pilot program as a resource to encourage all ASU programs to measure their social impact. UI’s main goal, therefore, is to develop accessible assessment resources that can be utilized by outreach programs across ASU.

**UI’s Plan of Action**

The actual process of evaluation will consist of a great deal of interaction between UI and the program coordinators. Through a series of meetings, which will be held as frequently as needed, UI and the program coordinators will work through a series of workbook sections that are discussed below. Each workbook has a definitive goal that will lead the program from the initial steps of program introspection to the final step of reporting on program accomplishments. In the end, UI will have helped each program to evaluate itself, while at the same time UI will have developed a workbook that can be used by other programs interested in self assessment. This initial semester will require a great deal of teamwork and feedback sessions so that the program and UI can learn together and ensure progress is made towards our goals.

UI has created a workbook in order to better facilitate the process of social impact assessment. The first workbook section requires UI and the program to complete a logic model. This helps the program coordinators to look introspectively at the program and assess what resources they have available, what goals they are pursuing, what outcomes they are achieving, and how the program is tied to the overall goals of the university. It
also gives the program an outsider’s perspective with input from the UI model. Once this foundational information has been identified, the program and UI build on this knowledge in the second section of the workbook.

The second section addresses the process of identifying all data that can be measured by the program and all data or information that the program desires to measure. By identifying all the different ends that can be measured, and making an informed decision on what data is most desirable to the program, UI and program coordinators can plan strategies to obtain the desired data and information.

The third section is the initial translation phase. UI will work with the program coordinators to identify potential metrics from outside of the program by which the program can evaluate its work. This section represents the core of the impact assessment metric selection. By completing the second section, the program and UI will have a good idea of what results the program wants to focus on to assess its impact. Thus, the third section is an attempt to put these goals into a perspective. This may mean comparing what the program has accomplished with the needs of the city, county, or state. It may mean examining the percentage of the target population served. The goal for this section is to marry the desired measurable results of the program to indicators that might shed some light on the program’s success.

The fourth section of the workbook will be individually tailored so to provide useful and thoughtful analysis of the indicators. This will also be a chance to evaluate the initial returns on the program.

The fifth and final section of the workbook will offer programs some instruction and guidance on how to use the information gained through this experience in getting its message out to others.

**Social Impact Assessment Advisory Board**

To assist in the development of this effort, UI will use the support of an advisory board comprised of ASU faculty and staff that can help supervise these efforts. The board’s primary role will be to help shape the individual program’s measurements. In the process of doing so, UI can gain insight on how to better prepare the workbooks and structure meetings to accomplish the goals discussed with the advisory board. Ideally, program coordinators would meet with every specialty on the board at some point during the pilot project to discuss the unique viewpoints and insights the board member brings to this task.

The advisory board will be comprised of people from several different specialties.

- Economics – will help assess the validity of our indicators and confirm determinations of impact assessment.
- Public policy – can help assess potential indicators and evaluate the value of the program’s goals to institutional goals.
• University administrators – help with the linking of program goals to university goals and identify how programs can be aligned more carefully with the university goals.

Timeline

January 2006
• Mid
  o UI completes Workbook section 1
  o UI selects programs to work with during the pilot project
  o UI identifies potential candidates for Advisory Board

February 2006
• Early
  o Meet with programs to introduce project
  o Workbook 1 – logic models
  o UI meets with potential Advisory Board members
• Mid
  o Meet with programs to evaluate logic models
  o UI completes logic model for programs
  o Programs complete individual logic models
• Late
  o Discuss goals with programs – begin matching goals to university goals
  o Identify Advisory Board members

March 2006
• Early
  o UI completes Workbook 2
  o Meet with program to finalize goals of program analysis and begin working on indicator selection
• Mid
  o Workbook 2 – Beginnings of assessment – data from within the organization, plan to collect, report
  o Schedule meetings for program coordinators and Advisory Board members.
  o Develop plan to “assess” impact
  o Identify data to be collected and begin collection
• Late
  o UI completes Workbook 3
  o Potential meeting time for program coordinators and Advisory Board. Ideally, programs could meet with the public policy board members who could evaluate Workbook sections 1 & 2. This can serve as a secondary assessment of the program and an assessment of how well the data to be collected or data being collected matches the end goals of assessment.
  o Review progress on internal data progress (Workbook 2)
April 2006

- **Early**
  - Workbook 3 – Identifying external sources (developing assessment from data sources outside of the program itself)
  - Meetings with Advisory Board

- **Mid**
  - Review progress on external sources (Workbook 3)

- **Late**
  - Potential meeting with economists from the Advisory Board to evaluate initial returns and validity of measurements
  - UI completes Workbook 4
  - Workbook 4 – Identifying metrics and analyze initial returns

May 2006

- **Early**
  - UI completes Workbook 5
  - Workbook 5 - Reporting

- **Late**
  - Review progress on Reporting
  - Write up “final” returns on semester project
  - Evaluate what needs to happen to make the program self-sufficient in evaluating social impact
  - Generate plan for future involvement
  - Meet with economists to examine “final” results and analyze how to strengthen results or what further can be done.

Summer 2006

- **Early**
  - Evaluate success of pilot
  - Identify programs for fall (if desired)
  - Continue to assist programs from pilot
  - Share developed resources

**Expected Outcomes from Pilot Program**

- A completed workbook by the end of the pilot program that can be distributed to other programs interested in assessing their social impact.

- The enhanced ability to assess programs.

- An increased capacity to state the qualitative and quantitative value of ASU’s work in the community.
Long Term Goals for UI’s Social Impact Assessment

From a long term perspective, UI will use the pilot program to determine how best to operate a similar program in the future. UI can examine whether it would be feasible to have a workbook to give away with a “do-it-yourself” approach, or whether some supervisory assistance can best meet the needs of ASU and the individual programs at the university. UI’s understanding of social impact assessment will increase and so will its ability to effectively determine and use correct impact indicators. UI will also plan to publish its results in some fashion and share these results with university administrators and other program coordinators.