



Impact

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A college campus at dusk is one of the most beautiful places on earth. In the early evening hours, a walk through a college campus leaves me feeling humbled, focused, inspired, and motivated. You can sense the totality of what happens at a university in those quiet moments. You can feel the history of those who came before you, the energy of those engaged in learning, research, and work presently, and the promise of tomorrow.

As we embark on a new academic year, it is important that college educators remember our impact. So few people are as blessed to work in a profession and environment where we create so much impact on a daily basis. When you look, you really see it all around.

Impact: created when we inspire that prospective student to see college not as a dream unattainable, but a reality worth pursuing. When we foster in the imagination of a young person the possibilities of not just attaining a degree, but of using that degree to create change in the world, to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Impact: created when we open the minds and hearts of our students to new ideas and concepts inside and outside the classroom. When we ask them to stretch their ability to think critically, when we see them understand a difficult theory, math problem, or synthesize their thoughts into a coherent and well-articulated argument, speech, or paper.

Impact: when we watch our students gain the self-confidence to tackle personal and group challenges and create change in themselves and their community. Supporting their peers who are similar and different to celebrate their unique individuality in a spirit of community. When we watch them come together to cheer at athletic events, to participate in community service work, to help their peers in study groups or make a new friend so nobody is left out.

Impact: when we come together in support of our friends, colleagues, and communities during times of trial and tribulation. The loss of a good friend, partner, or leader; a natural disaster; a human tragedy; personal struggles. Where tears, hugs, consoling words and compassion come together as we pick up the pieces.

Impact: when our faculty, research labs, and students make the next big discovery or solve the great questions and problems of our

times. When we cure disease, solve social problems, create art or music, publish the next great novel, build the next great skyscraper, bridge, or environmentally friendly car or home.

Impact: when our students cross the stage. When they become loyal alumni who put their education into action, inspiring their colleagues, families, and children. Providing for the ones they love, helping their communities, and becoming part of a legacy that is bigger than them individually.

If you walk a college campus at dusk, you can feel all this. It is easy to become distracted – budget cuts, staffing issues, tenure, grading, researching, writing, meetings, recruiting, early mornings, late nights. We tend to focus on those issues a lot in higher education. We rarely find time to focus on the impact we've made and how fortunate we are to work in a profession that allows us to make such an impact in very real and profound ways.

Everyone on a college campus is an educator – from faculty, to administrators, to staff members. Each interaction with a student is a rare moment that influences the success of our students in ways we may never see, though we take these moments for granted. It is important we frame our interactions as such. Young people watch and learn from us. If we are helpful, jovial, and engaged, our students will become so. If we are dismissive, harsh, or lackadaisical, our students will learn that as well. Our work ethic, actions, words, and effort make an impact, even if we can't always see it.

Take a walk at dusk. What is your impact? Remember our impact.