

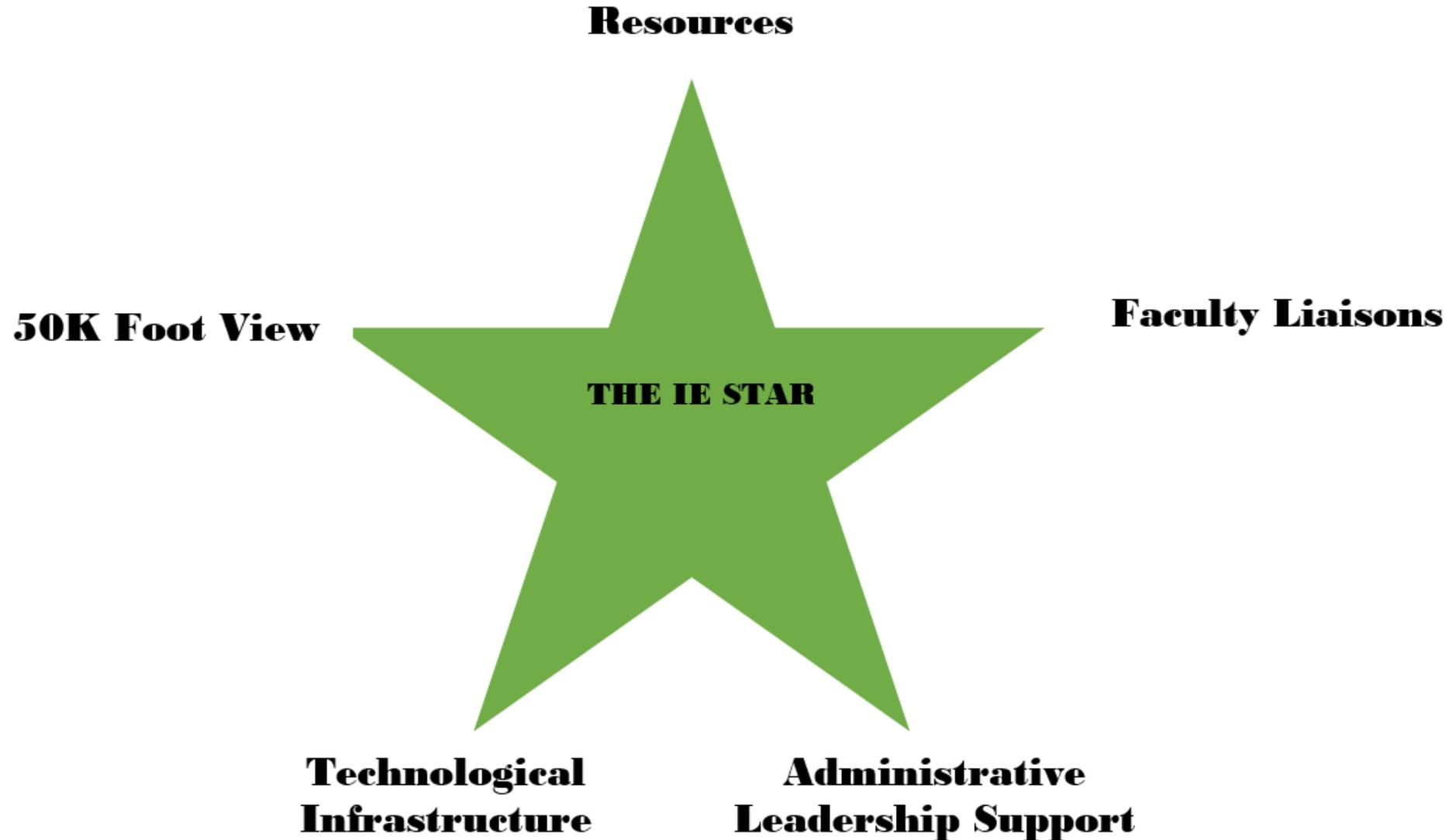
The Institutional Effectiveness Star: How to Ensure Engagement and Continuity



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The Institutional Effectiveness *Star*



Learning Outcomes

1. Determine the essential aspects of successful institutional effectiveness efforts;
2. Understand the areas of opportunity for the “IE Star” on your campuses;
3. Craft a preliminary proposal to address areas of opportunity on your campuses; and
4. Utilize existing literature to substantiate the preliminary proposal for addressing areas of opportunity in IE on your respective campuses.



University of South Carolina Upstate

Why A Star?

- Each aspect that we will discuss today is equally important when instituting campus wide IE efforts.
- If any one of the five points is not afforded appropriate attention, we risk implementing:
 - efforts that are not sustainable (resources)
 - processes that are unrealistic (faculty liaisons)
 - procedures without support or appropriate buy-in (administrative leadership support)
 - processes that are so cumbersome that they dissuade individuals from participating and delay full implementation (technological Infrastructure)
 - processes and procedures where we are overinvested and do not allow faculty or appropriate unit leadership to lead efforts (50K view)

Resources

Resources are necessary to lead, support, and continue successful institutional effectiveness efforts. Arguably, the most important resource is that of human capital. Ensuring that the individuals within institutional effectiveness are knowledgeable of assessment best-practice requires that the organization invest in training, education, and collaboration. This is referred to as “assessment literacy” (Davies & Taras, 2018).

Resources

Think of resources beyond money. Do IE staff, faculty, and liaisons have:

- Appropriate and relevant professional development that is tailored toward their level of involvement;
- Access to individuals who can provide guidance, support, and references when questions arise; and
- An understanding of continuous improvement and its impact on students, college sustainability, and accreditation;

Faculty Liaisons

Faculty Liaisons are central to institutional efforts in that they act as a conduit between institutional assessment offices and the work performed within classrooms to not only educate students, but also be able to prove the educational processes are taking place (Okpala & Walker, 2018). The faculty liaisons provide perspective, information and opportunity for institutions to include the foremost stakeholder in academic program assessment – the faculty (Higher Education Quality, 2016).

Faculty Liaisons

Faculty involvement with assessment processes has traditionally been categorized as ‘tense (Ewell, 2009).’ However, this can be overcome with a number of deliberate practices tailored toward your campus climate. Consider the following:

- Identify faculty members who have a natural inclination toward assessment. Psychology and education are good places to start. Also consider checking with faculty who are involved in program specific accreditation processes. (Example: ABET (Engineering), AACSB (Business), CEPH (Public Health))
- Build professional development, support, and resources into the actual assessment process.
- Involve students – faculty really like students! (NILOA, 2012)
- Provide a stipend.

Administrative Leadership Support

The support of administrative leadership is important in the success of all institutional effectiveness efforts. Administrative leaders often have multiple tasks, stakeholders, and constituencies to consider when crafting the best outcomes for their given institution. Inherent to this process is that of the *Leader as Planner*. Although the administrators may not perform day-to-day tasks, it is a commonly held belief that planning processes are integral to the success of any leadership (Burns, 1978) and has been a demonstrable aspect of ongoing success in multiple arenas – including higher education.

Administrative Leadership Support

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” – American proverb (cliché)

- It is exceptionally difficult to change the culture of an institution/organization without buy-in from leadership (Anderson, 2017).
- In order for the IE star to be effective, administrative leaders have to (1) believe in IE and Continuous Improvement (2) openly and frequently express support and (3) provide resources for its advancement.
- Individuals are more likely to participate in efforts when there is explicit administrative support.

Technological Infrastructure

The technological infrastructure is an aspect of institutional effectiveness that requires close collaborative efforts with an organization's information technology and institutional research teams. Without the appropriate technological infrastructure, teams can spend excessive amounts of time collating and aggregating data within systems that are not designed to perform those specific tasks. The technological infrastructure can also be resource intensive and require institutions to prioritize budget related costs.

Technological Infrastructure

- Technological Infrastructure is (1) expensive (2) requires continuous updates and (3) staff who are knowledgeable. There is no way around the aforementioned three points. Invest in the technology and the people. Without it, an institution will ultimately spend more money in womanpower and manpower.
- Patchwork systems are frustrating and dissuade full engagement and full implementation of IE efforts.

The 50,000 Foot View

The 50,000 foot view is a colloquial term that suggests that the appropriate level of involvement with program level academic assessment is one of high-level review for institutional effectiveness staff at a given institution. Once processes have been appropriately implemented and continually utilized, it is important for institutional effectiveness efforts to take faculty assessment knowledge into consideration when designing processes. The goal of the institutional effectiveness team should be one of best-practice and intermittent help as needed.

The 50,000 Foot View



- As IE staff and assessment professionals we must remember:
 - We do not OWN these processes nor the associated data (usually). We are stewards of information and processes; therefore, we must be responsible stewards.
 - Flexibility is valuable. Processes should not be so rigid that they do not allow academic and functional units to adjust their processes to improve effectiveness.
 - All changes and updates should begin with a research process that involves collecting data – both quantitative and qualitative – that help frame the current processes in terms of what is working and what is not working.

Activity

Step 1:

SAHs (Stakeholders, Allies, Holdouts) – Do you know who these folks are? If not, it may be beneficial to identify them before beginning any sort of change, update, implementation process.

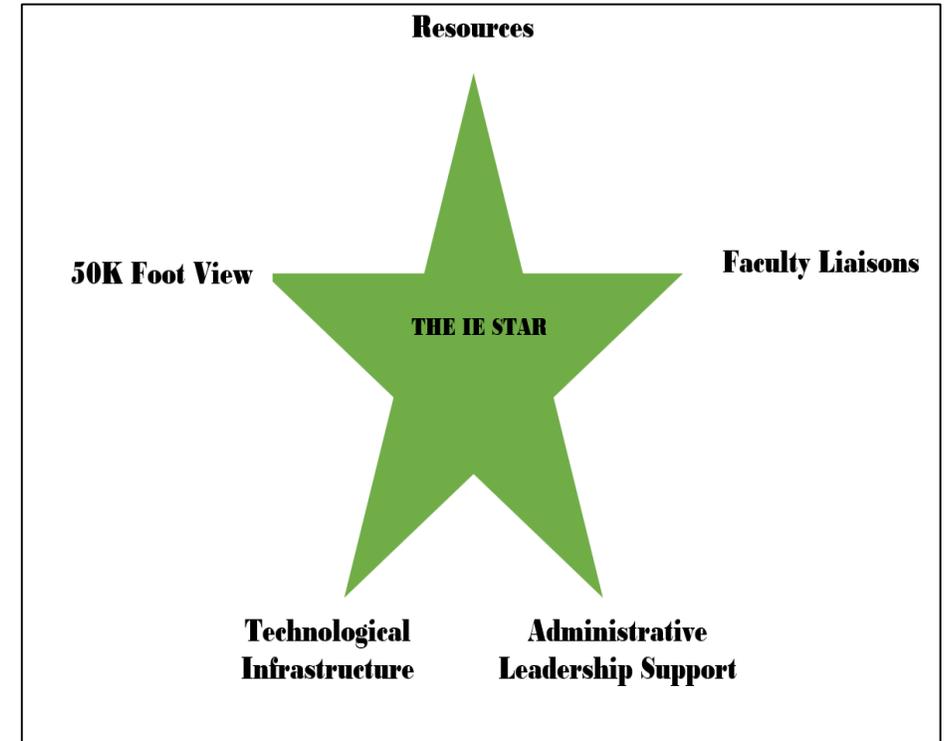
- **Why is this important?**

- Want to avoid entering into situations where you are not privy to the nuisances of a particular program, unit, or organization.
- Finding allies early can help move the agenda forward at a faster pace.
- Identifying holdouts can help conserve mental energy. This means that IE staff don't expend an inordinate amount of energy on individuals who will not immediately buy-in, no matter how much information, data, and support is offered.

Activity

Step 2:

- What aspects of the Star does your institution do well?
- Where are the opportunities for improvement?
- What aspects of this processes can IE staff do on their own? (Trick question. None of it.)
 - Identify the necessary support for each point of the start.



Activity

Step 3:

- Regardless of your identified opportunities, it can't all be done at once. Identify which area of opportunity is most pressing on your campus at this time.
- Find research that supports your perspective regarding implementation processes that will improve IE efforts on your campus.
- Create a timeline for implementation. Take into consideration:
 - SAHs
 - Resources (financial, people)
 - What type of support will you need as IE/assessment?
 - Create “check-in” points (benchmarks)

References

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