Syracuse University
Newhouse School of Public Communications

Creating Accessible, Inclusive, and Transparent Newhouse Assessment Platforms (P.S. No One Asked for This)

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Background
- The Newhouse School (NS) holds accreditation from the Accrediting Council on Education Journalism and Mass Communications (ACEJMC). It received exemplary feedback during a successful reaccreditation in 2023.
- Annually, NS collects assessment data from each program, while conducting a comprehensive review every four years.
- Following the 2023 reaccreditation, the previous assessment director resigned from the position.

Motivation for this Project
- Historically, assessment relied heavily on the expertise of the former director and a select few staff members, posing a risk of institutional knowledge loss.
- There's a noticeable lack of awareness among stakeholders regarding the assessment process and responsibilities.
- To mitigate these challenges, the project aims to establish a culture of schoolwide ownership of the assessment process.
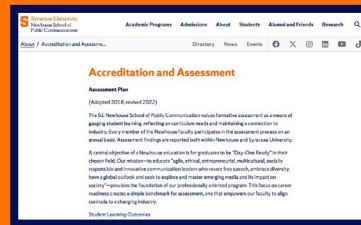
Main Stakeholders
- Administrative: NS Director of Assessment, NS Academic Affairs Specialist, NS Academic Affairs Associate Dean, NS IT Director, and NS Communications Director
- Operational: NS Assessment Committee, NS Staff, NS Program: Chairs, Directors and Coordinators

Fact Finding
- Held conversations with various Newhouse stakeholders including administrators, faculty, and staff.
- Identified a lack of easily accessible assessment resources and encountered uncertainty regarding timelines and resource availability.
- Participation in the process was found to be inconsistent or absent amongst stakeholders.
- Staff expressed a desire for increased agency and autonomy in the process.
- Opinions on assessment varied from support to discontent.
- Both the Newhouse Communications and IT departments agreed to support the project.

Assessment Leadership Institute Mini-Grant Project
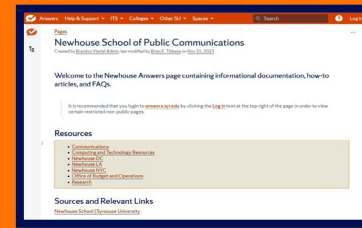
External Platform
- Upgrade the current Accreditation and Assessment website to an interactive platform.
- Enhance the depth of information on our assessment process and data to address FAQs from both internal stakeholders and external audiences.
- Align our assessment website with the exemplary standards of our ACEJMC site report, positioning it as a model for other ACEJMC programs.

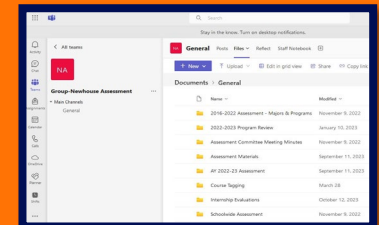**Current Assessment Website**

Hybrid Platform
- Create an assessment and program review section on the Newhouse Answers page.
- This platform would provide internal stakeholders clear and detailed instructions and examples regarding the assessment process.
- The platform would also provide links to external resources.
- This information could be found by external audiences if they were directed to it.

Newhouse Answers Page

Internal Platform
- Internal assessment data is stored in a Microsoft Teams group, undergoing evaluation for folder organization and access permissions.
- The aim is to streamline the platform to enable stakeholders within each program to easily access and review previously submitted data, including contributions from their peers.

Assessment Teams Page

What's Happened
- Adjusted the data collection period for assessment and program review based on stakeholder feedback.
- Provided stakeholders assessment examples for best practices.
- Created user-friendly forms to formalize data collection.
- Conducted personalized meetings to provide deeper insight into assessment and program review responsibilities for stakeholders.
- Transformed assessment committee meetings into collaborative working sessions for assessment coordinators.
- Engaged with the Newhouse IT Director to explore access to the Newhouse Answers page and optimize its utilization.
- Consulted with the Newhouse Communications Director to outline requirements and procedures for upgrading our website.

Action Plans/Next Steps
- The External Platform upgrade is slated for completion by Spring 2025. While initial upgrade requests were submitted to the Communication team this semester, other priorities within Communications are currently taking precedence.
- The Hybrid Platform will require more hands-on involvement from the NS Director of Assessment and Program Review, Academic Affairs Specialist, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to familiarize themselves with the system and construct it. We anticipate this resource to be operational by late Fall 2025.
- The Internal Platform is presently undergoing updates and will undergo further revisions as we gather feedback from various stakeholders utilizing the platform.