MEMORANDUM

TO:         Dr. Joe Scartelli, Acting Provost, Radford University

FROM:     Core 101/103 Assessment Team:
              Dr. Carol Geller, Dr. Lee Stewart, Dr. Sam Zeakes

DATE:      24 August, 2010

SUBJECT:   Summary of Findings and Recommendations for President Kyle
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1. **Purpose of Research:**  To assess the Core 101 and 103 classes for the Fall 2009 semester.

2. **Primary Sources of Research Data Used in Assessment:**
   - One time end of semester formative evaluations of the 101/103 classes by all students
   - Through focus group interviews with students, by personal interviews with teaching faculty plus Core Coordinators and administrators who were directly associated with the Core
   - University documents

3. **Synopsis of Findings:**

**GENERAL:**
   - Overall, both faculty and students supported the concept of the Core
   - Students consistently commented how impressed  they were  by the faculty's dedication, talent, commitment and willingness to help.

**CURRICULUM:**

*Finding:  Written and Oral Communication*
   o      Observed an improvement in Written and Oral Communication skills of students.

   **RECOMMENDATIONS:**
   ✓ That more interdependent writing and oral communication exercises be included in the classes.
   ✓ That written and oral communication skills be continually enhanced via specific exercises built in to all classes across campus.

*Finding:  Critical Thinking*
   o Critical thinking proved difficult for faculty to teach because faculty were not familiar with the vocabulary they were being asked to use in their teaching.
   o Critical thinking proved difficult for faculty to assess because the development of cognitive skills (for most) is a time dependent, mental maturation process that takes years to develop.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**
- ✓ That Faculty and Core Coordinators agree upon a common, course specific/critical thinking vocabulary.
- ✓ That critical thinking exercises be designed in such a way that they would be integrated with the written and oral communication components.

*Finding: Technology/Information Literacy*
- o Students were well versed in how to make use of popular technology (Facebook, U-Tube, Twitter, etc.),  but most were not as familiar in using  WebCT, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Library search engines, etc.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**
- ✓ That a more modern and dependable course management system be adopted.
- ✓ That course specific technology be identified and that a plan for training students outside of classes be implemented.
- ✓ That technology exercises be incorporated into the written, oral, and critical thinking components of the class/es
- ✓ That faculty be competent and comfortable prior to teaching the technology required in the classes.

**OTHER  FINDINGS:**

*Timeline:*  There was not enough time for planning, training, and assessment.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**
- ✓ That faculty be provided the time to exchange ideas and develop appropriate exercises.
- ✓ That there be regular and on- going training available for faculty in all four major goal areas.
- ✓ That an assessment protocol be built into the course design.

*Communication:*  There was a breakdown in communication at all levels.

**RECOMMENDATION:**
- ✓ That a clearly defined chain of command be established to facilitate effective communication.

*Resources:* Financial resources were not readily available to support the Core.

**RECOMMENDATION:**
- ✓ That a visible, pre-designated budget be in place prior to the beginning of the Core courses.

***OTHER COMMENTS:***

According our research, the Core has the potential to be a great opportunity for Radford University.   It could:
- ✓ Raise the stature of RU
- ✓ Enhance recruitment
- ✓ Help produce superior graduates
- ✓ Provide new opportunities for faculty scholarship
- ✓ Ensure funding opportunities
- ✓ Help make students more competitive for entering a global work force
- ✓ Help us produce a graduate who will be better able to make a contribution to society