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

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**
   - 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**
   - 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.
   - 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
- 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