

## **Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee Report on Assessment-Related Committee Charges and Core Curriculum**

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee gave the Senate Curriculum Committee two charges related to assessment. Each of the charges had several parts. The first task was to liaise with the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee (CCAC) and the Core Director regarding:

1. The assessment of Core A;
2. Possible revision of the Core Curriculum learning objectives as needed; and
3. Whether Core A is meeting learning objectives as shown by assessment data.

The second task was to review and report on assessment efforts currently underway, including the nature of assessments, their purpose, and their relationship to state or accrediting agency requirements. As part of this task, the Executive Committee asked the Curriculum Committee members to consider the desirability of creating a central website for assessment that would summarize and contextualize assessment efforts across the university in order to consolidate data collection and reduce the effort required for multiple and perhaps redundant data creation and reporting.

### **Liaison with the CCAC and the Core Director**

Dr. Erin Webster-Garrett will act as liaison with CCAC and the Core Director.

In addition, we discussed with Dr. Steve Owen our concern, which he shares, over the fact that 85-percent of Core 201/202 classes currently are taught by adjunct faculty. Dr. Owen indicated his commitment to rectifying this and is reviewing several possible alternatives. Faculty opinion concerning these courses remains divided. Some of us believe that any resources would be better used within the various departments and disciplines because "...no one chooses a school based on its general education program." They choose majors and majors must be supported. Some of us believe just as strongly that these are the classes that will make students successful within their disciplines and that a developmental approach is essential in providing students with the critical thinking, written and oral communication skills, and ethical reasoning skills needed not just in their classes, but throughout their lives. Some of us firmly believe that the Core should have included more of one discipline or another, or that it strays too far from the meaning of a liberal education. The important point is that every one of us is thinking about what's best for our students. There is much more going on here than "turf wars" or "old-fashioned" thinking. The university faculty needs to understand that no one is being territorial or mean-spirited in the positions they take concerning the Core Curriculum.

### **Assessment Efforts Currently Underway**

The members of the Senate Curriculum Committee met with Dr. Steve Owen and Ms. Bethany Bodo to discuss the items related to this task. Review of the pertinent documents and that conversation, along with some follow-up, revealed the following.

#### **University Core A (Core 101 and 102)**

1. Assessment rubrics currently are being drafted. Dr. Owen hopes these rubrics will be finalized by December 2011. The goal is rubrics that are clear, reliable, and genuinely tap the learning outcomes Core 101 and Core 102. Faculty members will be asked to "test drive" the rubrics this year in order to evaluate reliability, clarity, and validity.

2. Last spring CCAC and Faculty Senate approved an assessment plan that specified the pieces of student work that will be used for the assessment of Core 101 and 102. Currently samples of student work related to the assessment objectives are being collected from all sections of Core 101 and 102.
3. A draft report will be written in 2013-2014 and a final report, including any suggestions for revisions will be done in 2014-2015. The process will be to continue to collect work from students related to the assessment outcomes for the next two years. Once the rubrics are finished, they will begin to be applied to the collected works.

### University Core A (Core 201 and 202)

1. A Formative Assessment has been undertaken and the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee and the Core Curriculum Advisory Committee have reviewed it. CCAC also has issued a report that summarizes some of the issues still faced by these classes in terms of implementation and faculty acceptance.
2. Evaluation of the Formative Assessment Report and the CCAC Report on Proposals for Core Curriculum Improvement are hampered by the fact that only a small number of individuals responded to either survey. There was very little student response to the survey undertaken as part of the Core 201/202 formative assessment. Six Core 201 students and six Core 202 students responded. Five of 12 Core 201 instructors participated and six of 24 Core 202 instructors participated.
3. Many people have worked very hard to develop and improve University Core A. They continue to work to provide a stable cohort of instructors, refine the exercises and reduce their number, and increase the level of content in the workbook. Next year there will be a streamlined Core A text that will be piloted as an E-Book.
4. As with Core 101 and 102, rubrics will be developed and tested, and student work samples related to the learning objectives will be collected and evaluated over the next several years. A draft report will be written in 2013-2014 and a final report, including any suggestions for revisions will be done in 2014-2015.
5. Currently, the QEP Writing Team believes one of the best ways to implement the Scholar Citizen theme would be to tag specific sections of Core 102 and 202 as QEP-related. This can be done without increasing the assessment burdens for faculty because the QEP learning objectives map very well with the learning outcomes for Core 202.
6. In the fall of 2012 there are 99 sections listed in the course schedule; way too many of them will be taught by adjuncts. **This past year 85% of the Core 201/202 sections were taught by adjuncts.** What does that say about what the university and faculty think about this curriculum? No matter how good these instructors are, it defies common sense to believe that most of them will make being an adjunct at \$2700 a course their career.
7. **The members of this committee have different disciplines, different interests, different points of view about University Core 201 and 202. However, in our discussions we all reached the same conclusion: The faculty needs to take responsibility for this program in some way. Either we increase the level of resources allocated to University Core 201/202 or they should be restructured or eliminated.**

### Evaluation of Core Coordinators

1. According to a motion passed last spring by the Faculty Senate and currently working its way through the administrative process, CCAC is charged with cooperating with the Core Director on the evaluation of the Core Coordinators "where appropriate." However, the motion makes no mention of either the formulation of job descriptions for the Core Coordinator or evaluation

criteria. The motion is attached as Appendix A. There is likely to be no action by the Core Director on this matter during this academic year.

### Evaluations of the Core Faculty

1. The chair of the English Department evaluates the faculty teaching Core 101, 102, and 103. Dr. Owen indicated that he intends to do reviews every semester of adjunct faculty teaching Core 201 and 202 using both in-class observation and the university's form for student evaluation of faculty. For full-time faculty teaching CORE-201/202, official evaluations will be prepared by their chairs during the normal evaluation cycle, and their chairs will see their CORE student evaluations. The Core Director will see the Core 201/202 student evaluations for full-time faculty assigned to departments. Additionally, SACs is now requiring evaluation of adjunct instructors every semester. This will add to the workload.
2. Faculty Senate passed a motion (Appendix A) tasking CCAC to work with the Core Director to develop criteria for adjunct faculty teaching Core 201/202. This was finally approved at the last Board meeting, and CCAC has a subcommittee that will be working on this issue.

### Timeline for the Evaluation of University Core B and College Cores A and B

1. Assessment will be cyclical for these classes.
2. Assessment is to be conducted for three semesters (Fall, Spring, and Summer) of one year. Assessment of different areas of the Core will be conducted on a staggered basis in accordance with the timeline in Appendix B of the Assessment Plan consolidate data collection and reduce the effort required for multiple and perhaps redundant data creation and reporting. The committee raised the issue of faculty members having to list each student in a Core class separately on the assessment reporting form. This could be very onerous for classes enrolling hundreds of students (basic Biology, Geology, etc.). The origin of the requirement that students be listed individually is to ensure anonymity for the faculty. The point of this assessment is to assess the course, not the faculty member.

### Evaluation of the New Scholar Citizen QEP

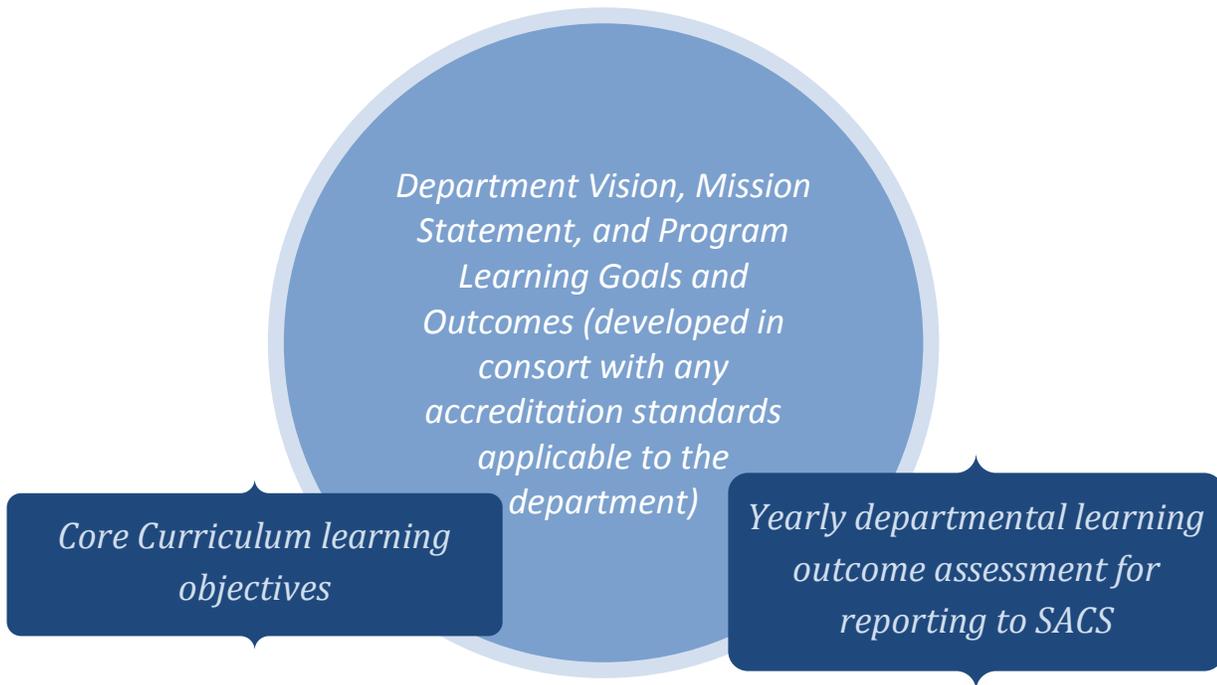
1. SACS does not require that all programs and departments implement the QEP. As Dr. Erin Webster-Garrett has explained to the curriculum committee and to the Senate as a whole, Radford University's new QEP will be implemented within specifically tagged sections of CORE 102 and 202 and then on a voluntary basis in 300-400 level classes by faculty who wish to participate.

### Inter-Relationship of Various Types of Assessment

Ms. Bodo has a revised PowerPoint on assessment. The committee has given this PowerPoint presentation to Dr. Herman to post to the Faculty Senate website. This report attempts to summarize much of that PowerPoint and there is a pictorial outline of the relationship among the various types of assessment, taken from that PowerPoint, at the end of this report (Appendix C).

1. Various types of assessment for which departments may be responsible
  - A. Accreditation
  - B. SACS departmental learning outcomes
  - C. QEP learning outcomes—BUT ONLY IF THE FACULTY MEMBER WANTS THE CLASS TO BE PART OF THE SCHOLAR CITIZEN FELLOWS PROGRAM

- D. Core Curriculum assessment—IF THE CLASS IS PART OF UNIVERSITY CORE B OR COLLEGE CORE A or B
3. Every aspect of assessment should begin with a department’s vision, mission and program goals, as determined (where relevant) by its accreditation standards. That is supposed to be the cornerstone for every other form of assessment. A department mission statement should dictate the program learning outcomes that will be reported to SACS.
  4. In effect, what some departments face is a two-track system of assessment that looks something like the one below.



5. SACS does **not** require that every learning outcome be assessed every year.

### **Assessment Website**

There is an Assessment Website under development and revision. The Director of Assessment recognizes that this is an important element in enhancing faculty understanding of the assessment process.

## Recommendations

The Core Curriculum is supposed to be our signature program—one of the things that make RU a different and better choice for students. After (1) two discussions with Core Director Steve Owen; (2) discussion with Ms. Bethany Bodo; (3) a discussion with the authors of the Core 201/202 Formative Assessment Report; and (4) reading the Core 201/202 Formative Assessment Report and the CCAC Report on Reform of Core 201/202, Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee members reached the following conclusions:

1. Assessment efforts at Radford University are understaffed and under-funded. The Core Director and Director of the Office of Assessment have no support staff. SACs was concerned about the status of RU's assessment efforts. But we cannot continue to expect one person to do all the assessment that is required today. We recommend a provision for the addition of full-time assessment professional/s and administrative professional/s who will be shared by the Core Director and the Director of the Office of Assessment.
2. University Core 201 and 202 is not fully supported by either the university administration or the university's faculty.
3. This lack of support has had implications for SACs review, and for the content, staffing, and external perceptions of the Core Curriculum
4. Ever since the new Core Curriculum was adopted faculty members have said: "The Core belongs to everyone." If it belongs to us all; we all must take some responsibility in ensuring it does the job it is meant to do. The members of this committee believe it is time to at least begin to provide the resources required to ensure that this program works in the long term. Otherwise, we need to eliminate Core 201/202. We either put gas in the bus, or we get off the bus.

Overall, this committee recommends opening a conversation about what is the best way to take responsibility for the Core Curriculum, in particular Core 201/202. To initiate that conversation the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee recommends adoption of the following two motions—to get us talking to one another in the way everyone on the Curriculum Committee believes we can—respecting each other's opinions and trying to find some common ground.

**WHEREAS:** University Core A was implemented without establishment of a strong structural foundation or sufficient resources.

**WHEREAS:** Lack of resources has hampered the ability of Core 201/202 to

- Focus sufficient effort on integration of content into the courses;
- Develop a thorough and in-depth training program for those engaged in teaching Core 201/202;
- Ensure stable and consistent faculty/staff resources to teach these classes; and
- Provide sufficient support services for the Core director and Director of the Office of Assessment;

**RESOLVED:** The Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee urges Faculty Senate to adopt the following motions.

**MOTION I:** Resolved that the Faculty Senate supports a meeting of the Provost, the chair of CCAC, the chair of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, the Core Director, and the Faculty Senate president

to discuss ways to meet faculty concerns with Core 201/202 within the current Core framework and discuss strategies for providing the Core with needed resources.

**RATIONALE:**

- There is agreement among the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, the Core Curricular Advisory Committee, and the current Core Curriculum director that the university's commitment to the Core Curriculum is insufficient to ensure the Core's long-term success.
- A meeting of the Provost, the chair of CCAC, the chair of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, the Core director, and the president of the Faculty Senate would be useful in establishing a foundational plan for the Core curriculum's long-term success.

**MOTION II:** Resolved that the Faculty Senate supports hiring 20 Special Purpose faculty members for 2013-2014 (new positions). Fifteen of these Special Purpose faculties would teach 2 sections within departments and 2 sections of Core 201 or 202 each semester. Departments that develop Core 201 or 202 courses would be eligible to request and compete for one of these 15 Special Purpose faculty members. The other five Special Purpose faculty positions would fund individuals who would be attached to the Core Director's office and teach 5 courses each semester of Core 201/202.

**RATIONALE:**

- Radford University maintains that the Core Curriculum provides an essential educational foundation for undergraduate studies because it: (1) implements a contemporary vision of a liberal education and (2) provides the kind of education required for citizens of a democracy by providing the ability to think, read, write, and speak about important matters. It is time to fulfill that promise or restructure University Core A.
- At the time the Core was established, many faculty members recognized that it could not succeed without appropriate support. That support has not been forthcoming.
- Although much progress has been made in the evolution of University Core A, there remain issues related to resources, content, and staffing that must be addressed if it is to be successful. Providing the full-time faculty described in this motion would mean that 55 sections of Core 201/202 (30 by faculty attached to departments and 25 taught by faculty attached to the Core Curriculum) would be taught consistently by a stable group of full-time faculty members who can embed a disciplinary perspective into their courses.

The cost of this motion is \$1,292,850 with salaries of \$45,000 and \$1,436,500 with salaries of \$50,000. If this much money is not available now, then we recommend phasing in the hiring of these Special Purpose faculty members over the next 4 years at the proportion of 25% dedicated to the Core and 75% dedicated to departments; that is, for every five hired four would be housed in departments and one would be dedicated solely to teaching Core 201 and 202.

FINAL: April 17, 2012

Respectfully Submitted:

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Margaret Hrezo, College of Humanities and Behavioral Sciences  
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**Jonathon Tso respectfully dissents to the committee's recommendation concerning Motion II.**

# APPENDIX A

Motion on CCAC function incorporating UEC suggestions and deleting reference to the Faculty Handbook.

Committee Function: Reviews course proposals and makes recommendations for or against inclusion in the core curriculum, develops and supervises an assessment plan for the core curriculum, considers assessment reports on the effectiveness of the curriculum or elements thereof, recommends curricular programmatic modifications based on assessment results, and reviews and comments on recommendations made concerning the core curriculum. Faculty Senate should comment and approve any changes. SGA must be provided the opportunity to comment.

Acts with regards to UNIV Core 201 and 202 as a Personnel Committee. These duties as listed below will be carried out in cooperation with the Core Director and Core Coordinators:

Elects a sub-committee of no less than three tenured faculty members from no less than three different Colleges (if possible) to fulfill the following responsibilities in a timely manner. One of the members should be the Core A Faculty Representative who is a non-voting member of CCAC. If this person is not a tenured faculty member, then at the beginning of that academic year, the Core 201 and Core 202 Faculty should elect a tenured faculty member from their group to serve on the sub-committee. Duties of this sub-committee will be as follows:

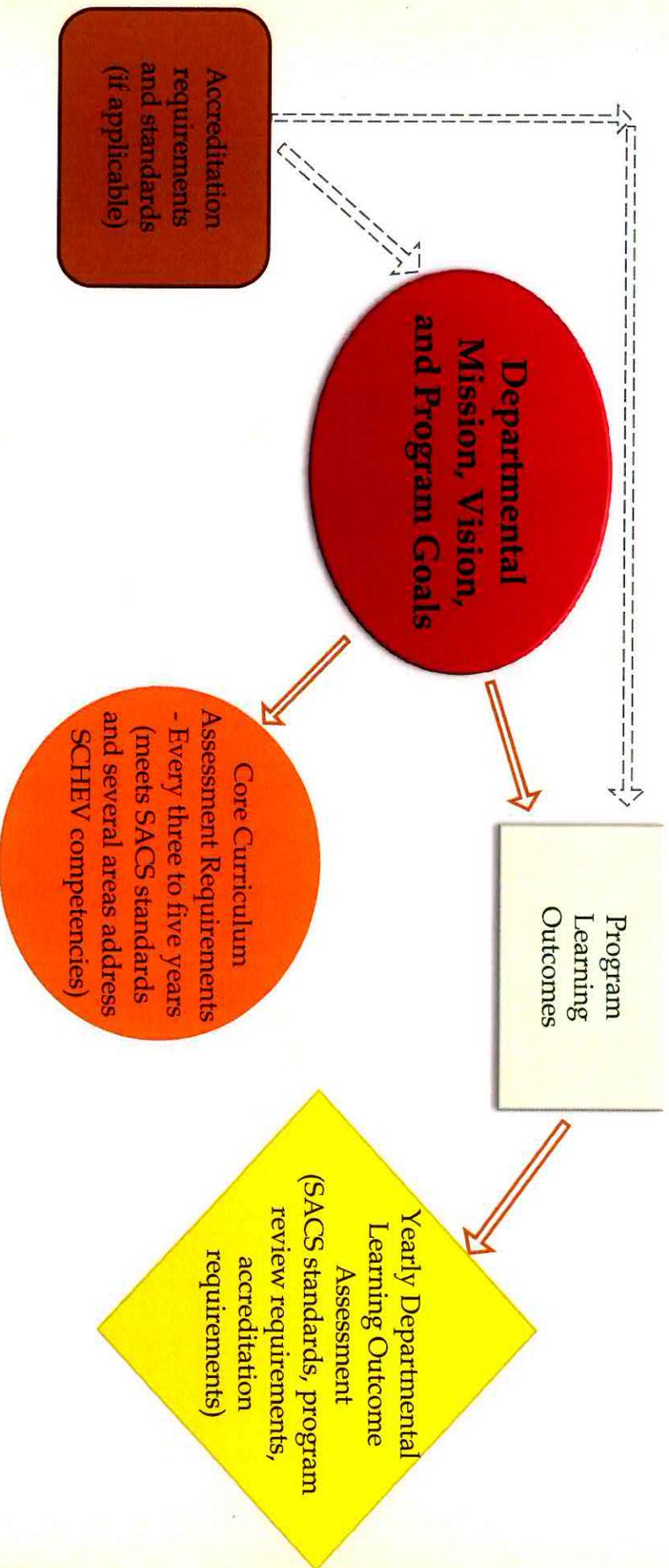
1. Working with the Core Director and Core Coordinators and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs to develop written criteria for hiring and evaluating the teaching performance of all Core 201 and 202 faculty in their respective Core classes and for the evaluation of the Core Director and Core Coordinators where appropriate. (Where such criteria exist, CCAC will review and comment on existing documents.)
2. Assisting the Core Director and Core Coordinators in reviewing credentials, proposals, and syllabi of faculty hired to teach Core 201 and/or Core 202 classes in light of the above criteria.
3. **Submitting** annually to the Core Director and the Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs an evaluation of the Core Director's effectiveness based on the criteria established in the process described.
4. Hearing and review of grade appeals against faculty teaching in Core 201 and 202.

# APPENDIX B

**Table 1. Timeline for Entire Core Curriculum Program (See Appendix A for specific dates for Area Requirements)**

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>	<u>2012-2013</u>	<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>	<u>2015-2016</u>
University Core A	Pilot testing	Implement	Implement	Draft Report	Final / Plan revision	Implement
Mathematical Sciences	Plan Development	Implement	Report draft		Final / Plan revision	Implement
Natural Sciences	Plan Development	Implement	Report draft		Final / Plan revision	Implement
Humanities		Plan Development	Implement	Report draft	Final	Plan revision
Visual and Performing Arts		Plan Development	Implement	Report draft	Final	Plan revision
Social and Behavioral Sciences		Plan Development	Implement	Report draft	Final	Plan revision
US Perspectives			Plan Development	Implement	Final	
Global Perspectives			Plan Development	Implement	Final	
Foreign Languages			Plan Development	Implement	Final	
Health and Wellness			Plan Development	Implement	Final	

# How does this all tie together?



SACS Requirement: QEP Assessment  
(Implementation and Assessment Plan under development)