Critical Thinking

Developing critical thinking skills is an important first step in your college career. Critical thinking entails a careful review and analysis of facts and issues. This includes questioning biases, methods of acquiring data, and determining repercussions to various constituencies. Critical thinking separates humans from other mammals. Humans' ability to reason, process alternatives, posit questions, and the like makes us uniquely multidimensional creatures.

The Role of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is integral to your success, regardless of your career path. Remember, employers are looking for forward-thinking, driven leaders who can analyze situations while offering solutions and cost savings to the bottom line.

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Developing critical thinking skills takes practice and problem posing. Problem posing helps you develop critical thinking skills. Let’s do a practice exercise of problem posing where you critically reflect and question issues presented in the newspaper. Select and read a short article. As you read the article, highlight any dates, locations, or statistics, and then ask the following questions:

Step 1. What is the writer trying to convince me?

Step 2. What information is missing from the article?

Step 3. If I believe the writer and the article, who is affected?

Step 4. What or who has changed my opinion if I decide to believe or question elements in the article?

Afterwards, try this problem-posing technique as you watch the news. The combination of hearing the story and seeing pictures reinforces the key points of a story. For this exercise, develop your own set of problem-posing questions. Continue to practice problem posing when you are presented with any new issue.

Mastering Critical Thinking

As with anything, the only way to master critical thinking is to practice. With practice, you will refine your questions and see various alternatives in making decisions. In the development process, keep track of what you learned from the four-step process. You will notice that with practice the development process will turn into mastery; however, there will be points when you will make mistakes, so keep working on the process of defining and redefining strategies of critical thinking.