Introduction
Reading your favorite magazine or the newspaper, listening at a department meeting, participating in the hiring of new faculty and staff – what do all of these activities have in common? Critical thinking is required in each situation to assess the situation appropriately. Without critical thinking, servant-leaders may develop and rely upon the habit of reacting, responding based on gut feelings, or seeking only the advice of others and then making important decisions. Understanding the relationship between critical thinking and decision making is the first step toward making effective decisions.

Objective
"Critical thinking is that mode of thinking - about any subject, content, or problem - in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking and imposing intellectual standards upon them" (Paul & Elder, 2001, p. xx). We all think, but critical thinking is a conscious decision to create a habit in our lives that will become evident in our personal and professional lives. A lifetime could be spent constructing convincing arguments, assessing the validity of those arguments, and attempting to determine any found truths. A true critical thinker is compelled to not only apply critical thinking, but also to make a balanced decision, take an appropriate stand, or implement the decision as a result. Scriven and Paul captured the essence of critical thinking best in the following draft written specifically for The Center for Critical Thinking:

‘Critical Thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action (2004).’

Making a mindful, intentional change is the implementation of critical thinking. The personal decision to have a different type of marriage, or the professional decision to make suggestions at work, are both evidence of critical thinking. Just imagine a world in which none of the aforementioned happens. This is why understanding the applicable benefits of critical thinking is paramount to understanding the importance of each of the critical thinking components.

Summary
Critical thinking affects the way we think, live, and the decisions we make. Effective application of the critical thinking components both personally and professionally will provide the opportunity for better understanding about why others think differently and why/how we think the way we do.

References: