Executive Summary
Each fall, students interact with a librarian during one Freshman Seminar class period. Students practice and develop critical-thinking skills while learning about the College Archive and what may be found within an institutional archive.

Learning Outcomes
1. Students will use critical-thinking skills and work collaboratively in order to identify key events and characteristics about an alumnus’ life.
2. Keeping in mind the cultural context of the era, students will use critical-thinking skills and work collaboratively in order to anticipate what may have occurred on campus.
3. Students will anticipate their research need in order to determine reasonable sources for further research.

Key Findings for Fall 2018:
- Student group scores improved by 10% overall, with students’ acceptable and exemplary responses falling within the 87% to 96.5% range.
- There were far fewer incomplete worksheets than in past years, leading us to believe that tweaks made to the lesson content and timing improved the lesson overall.
- Although critical-thinking skills are higher-order skills, first-semester first-year students exhibited a capacity to use these skills within this lesson.
- Based on student and faculty anecdotal feedback, the students have benefited from practicing primary-document evaluation and have enjoyed learning about an actual St. John Fisher student.
Full Report

Learning Outcomes and Alignment

1. Students will use critical-thinking skills and work collaboratively in order to identify key events and characteristics about an alumnus’ life on campus in 1968.

   **Assessment:** Students list findings they would include in a memo to their superior, describing the alumnus and what he did during his time at Fisher.
   - All-College Goals – Inquiry & Analysis and Collaboration & Leadership
   - Freshman Seminar Goal 1 - Transitions - Students will learn skills necessary for academic success
   - Information Literacy Goals – Inquire, Gather, Evaluate, Integrate, Create

2. Keeping in mind the cultural context of the era, students will use critical-thinking skills and work collaboratively in order to anticipate what may have occurred on campus at the end of the 1967-1968 school year.

   **Assessment:** Student groups will answer on their group worksheet and share their conclusions with the class.
   - All-College Goals – Inquiry & Analysis and Collaboration & Leadership
   - Freshman Seminar Goal 1 - Transitions - Students will learn skills necessary for academic success
   - Information Literacy Goals – Inquire, Evaluate, Integrate, Create

3. Students will anticipate their research need in order to determine reasonable sources for further research.

   **Assessment:** Students describe additional sources they might consult to find more information about the topic.
   - All-College Goals – Inquiry & Analysis and Collaboration & Leadership
   - Freshman Seminar Goal 1 - Transitions - Students will learn skills necessary for academic success
   - Information Literacy Goals – Inquire and Gather

**Assessment**

**Critical-Thinking Rubric for Group Worksheet**

Total number of Freshman Seminar Sections = 28
Total number of worksheets collected = 131
Assessment sample selection: Worksheets from groups 2 and 4 in each section were evaluated. If group number was not indicated, a worksheet was selected at random from among the unnumbered worksheets in the section. Total of two worksheets from each section.

Sample size = 56 worksheets (43%)

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<th>TASKS</th>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Not Acceptable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task #1 Synthesize</strong> <em>(Questions 1&amp;2 on the worksheet)</em></td>
<td>Students will be able to interpret the information and identify key elements that describe the student and what he did on campus.</td>
<td>Students create a reasonable description of the student and what he did on campus based on evidence provided by 3 or more archive items.</td>
<td>Students create a reasonable description of the student and what he did on campus based on evidence provided by 1 or 2 archive items.</td>
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<td>Students create a reasonable description of the student and what he did on campus based on evidence provided by 1 or 2 archive items.</td>
<td>Students create a reasonable description of the student and what he did on campus unsupervised by archive items.</td>
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**Analysis**

- 96.5% of student groups adequately discerned the personality, characteristics, and accomplishments of the student portrayed in the archive documents. This is 10 percentage points higher than the prior year. Although fewer students responded at the exemplary level, the greater majority of the students performed at an acceptable level. For the most part, this decrease in exemplary work is a result of fewer students supporting their claims with evidence. Librarians made a concerted effort to reinforce the need to backup ones’ claims with evidence, and most students did better this time around.

- 87.5% of student groups articulated a reasonable conclusion to the Fisher 1967-1968 school year. This, too, is about 10 percentage points better than last year. Although fewer students made the connection between the events on campus relative to the 1960s culture, this would be considered higher-order thinking, which would not be expected of students at this developmental level. Most of the students ventured to make a claim, which is far better than the previous year.

- 94.5% of student groups identified at least one avenue for further research about this campus event. Very few groups skipped this question, indicating that last year’s change to the question format was successful. No changes need to be made at this time.

**Change**

The Freshman Seminar Critical Thinking exercise has evolved over time to focus more on leading students to use their critical-thinking skills. Although these skills are not expected to be fully developed among first-semester first-year students, the students have exhibited a capacity to use these skills within the lesson. I believe the students have benefited from practicing primary-document evaluation and have enjoyed learning about an actual St. John Fisher student from 1968.

The Freshman Seminar course is undergoing a major revision, and the Critical Thinking and the College Archives lesson will be adapted to fit more readily within the new format. The Archive lesson will shift to focus on the leadership skills (or lack of leadership) exhibited by the alumnus and organization for which he was student president. Additionally, the lesson will need to accommodate 4 sections of the First-Year Seminar
at once, making the class sizes much larger. The lesson will require technology that would allow responses from the larger number of groups. An attempt will be made to keep much of the essence of the Archive lesson intact, including the use of primary documents, critical thinking, and group work.

**Other Observations**

In all, the fall 2018 students performed at an acceptable level. The lesson was much improved over the previous year, with some changes to the worksheet format, and instructors stressing the need for providing evidence while providing verbal instruction. Although fewer students reached the exemplary level, the scores were generally higher.