

## **Amelia Brown**

I believed in my goals and dreams by applying for the Emerging Leader Program. After checking my mailbox and finding out that I had been accepted, I set goals for myself early on. I figured that this opportunity would be a general class where I would reflect on it as a simply "good" experience. Never in my mind, did I expect to emerge as an individual who painted the world as black or white but now in shades of gray. My experiences in the Emerging Leader Program cannot be summed up in one word. I have never had a class like this one where I looked forward to going and getting involved every single class period. My favorite activity dealt with the class dividing into three groups representing economic status and power. We made decisions that would affect all groups and it truly brought out the "true colors" of every ELI member.

I have grown so much as a leader from this experience. I have seen that everyone has an opportunity in his or her life to step out of their box or comfort zone and invest their talents into new experiences. The Emerging Leader Program has given me a clearer view of who I am and how I can grow from listening to others. I have enjoyed interacting with other students who are compassionate about learning, interested in getting involved, and most of all have concern for others.

I feel like so many doors have been opened for me because of this experience. I have had the opportunity through my Individual Leadership Project to get more involved in a program that has molded me as a leader. STOP (Students Taking On Prevention) the Violence, sponsored by Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, has enabled me to return to Monroe County Middle School and speak on youth violence. I want to encourage others on the University of Kentucky's campus to invest their time in

preventing youth violence. From my experiences with this project, I would possibly like to pursue public speaking and conduct research on this prevalent topic. Teamwork and dedication on my behalf will be skills I will utilize to become successful in reaching this goal!

I am not the same student leader I was before I opened the doors to the Emerging Leader classroom. I have learned to delegate responsibility and be more open-minded. Before, I took it upon myself to do all the work; however, now I see that by networking I can produce even better results! I would encourage other students to apply for this opportunity because it has shed a whole new light on me as a team player and group participant. I am so thankful to be able to see the flaws I have as leader, take the information learned in class, and then strive to improve myself. What a blessing each session has been to me! As quoted by Shakespeare, "We know what we are but not what we may be" seems to describe me as an individual. I know I am strong in my beliefs and this class has enabled me to share my views as well as my dreams to other participants.

This class is something that I will reflect on in years to come as a highlight of my college experiences. I have made lasting friendships with individuals whom at the beginning seemed so diverse, but now I can call them my friend. I have learned so much by taking the time to invest in learning as much as possible about individuals in the Emerging Leader Institute. Volunteering at the Salvation Army has made me a stronger individual as well. Volunteering with my classmates has brought the class to a whole new level. We felt strongly about the community service project, planned our goals, and then carried the project out with much success.

Elizabeth Bates and Barb Koetsier have been very energetic and so helpful throughout this semester. They have dug deep inside each ELI participant; encouraged us to think abstractly, and invest time to see what skills are hidden inside of us. Dr. Phyllis Nash, my peer mentor, has not only guided me through the semester, but is now someone that I admire and respect. I want to thank the Emerging Leader Institute for allowing me to follow my dreams and help pave my pathway toward success! Best of luck to future participants and most importantly remember that individuals are not born leaders, but learn by leading!