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When I applied for Emerging Leaders, all I knew essentially was that the course was about . . . leadership. I thought that I was going to be taught how to be a leader and I would go through an overnight transition and there I would be . . . a new leader. So first, nothing can magically happen like that. Second, becoming a leader is not that simple. There are steps in getting there and lessons that you have to learn. This is what Emerging Leaders is all about. The course allows you to develop the skills at your own pace and gives you several opportunities to practice them. Now that the class has ended, I can look back and see that, although not overnight, there was a "transition" that I went through over the course of the whole semester. The whole concept of Emerging Leaders is for each individual to take what the activities encompass and incorporate it into their own lives. The learning that you experience about yourself as a person is incredible.

The best part of Emerging Leaders for me was the group dynamics. We were such a fun group of people, totally diverse and uniquely different. The Institute is awesome just for bringing together people at the University of Kentucky that you might otherwise not meet. These are people that have their own lives, struggles, activities, and ideas. They taught me things about leadership just as much as the classes and activities did. And a benefit of the Institute is that you can use all the skills you learn right away in the group. Skills like project planning, communication, and personality types, were used right away while we went through the class. The best part is, these people want to learn as much as you do and they are all there for a reason. The University does not require the Institute; it is offered to people who are passionate about making a difference.

As far as actual concepts learned, there were a few that radically changed the way I thought about being a leader. I used to think that a leader was not one without a title. I used to think that management and task delegation made you a leader. I used to think that sometimes being a leader means doing it yourself to make sure it gets done right. I know now that the best leaders often aren't famous, they don't need titles and they aren't in it for the money. The best leaders don't need the title to feel good about themselves and the difference they are making. I know now the difference between being a leader and a manager and I can apply that to projects that I work on. I know now that teaching others and sharing ideas works better than trying to do all the work yourself. Above all, I learned that people are not born as leaders. There may be some pre-disposition to becoming a leader, but the actual tools a leader needs to be successful are learned. There are no magical transitions; you get as much out of the Institute as you put into it.

My personal project was one that I didn't look far to find. I used my personal ties to the Kentuckian, UK's yearbook to guide my project. I am currently the co-editor in chief; the other co-editor graduates in December of this year. Although I am already committed to my responsibilities to the yearbook (put out a good book), I decided to look at how I could make the job easier and more rewarding. There are several responsibilities that I had to do which are part of task management. These include designing the book, writing stories, editing, setting deadlines, etc. These seem simple enough but the structure of the company was cracking under pressure. Cracking because we had no staff, no guidance, and no money. This was the perfect time to develop a plan for the book. A sort of re-birth could occur and I could start it. We were starting with a new editor (me), a new media advisor in the College of Communications, and a new representative with our

publishing company. Using communication as the key to start my project, we recruited a staff and are now in the process of teaching them the skills they needed. We went from a staff of two to a staff of about fifteen. This was the first step. Other goals include awareness on campus, record book sales, senior involvement, winning awards, and possibly extending our help to Lexington area high schools. I ultimately want to make a positive change on UK's campus.

This project has allowed me to flex my "leadership muscles" and strengthen them. Communication, leadership models and collaboration have been my driving forces. The biggest realization I have had, though, comes from the "7 C's of Leadership" (outlined in the workbook. One of these is commitment. This is defined as intensity, the fuel that drives leaders and motivates them to reach their goals. There are three parts:

1. Knowing- The realization that change needs to be made.
2. Being- The emotional commitment and passion.
3. Doing- Devotion, involvement, perseverance.

Following this model has made my project easier to stay with during the rough times. I have battled self-doubt, lack of confidence, and time conflicts. With the things I have learned, the group encouragement, and the mentor group support, I faced my weaknesses and am still working on my project. I hope to produce something that I as well as the UK community will be proud of. Something that will remind students why they came to UK, and how proud they can be of what they have accomplished while they were here.

The Emerging Leader Institute doesn't make you a leader; this is something you have to work at and learn. There are no perfect leaders either. You can always improve

and the Institute provides an outlet, a friend, a structure to help you in this quest. Good luck and have fun.