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What did I take from ELI?

The Emerging Leader class sessions covered a broad spectrum of topics. One thing that I learned, during the beginning of the program, was the importance of open communication. During orientation, Elizabeth Bates explained that open communication was vital to a group because without it, members will keep their feelings inside and lose interest. I thought about Elizabeth's theoretical example quite a bit. The more I thought about it, the more I realized exactly how true it was. By analyzing student organizations that I am involved in, I found that I had a better impression of those groups where communication was the most open.

Another ELI topic that influenced me, was the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. The MBTI instrument asks a series of questions and then analyzes, "how you like to look at things and how you like to go about deciding things." The MBTI results confirmed the details of my personality; I am an introvert, sensor, thinker, and judger, or an ISTJ. As an ISTJ, responsibility is my driving force.

How did the ELI experience affect me?

The information provided in ELI indirectly influenced a great deal of all that I did this semester. ELI provided in-depth coverage of topics such as: diversity, mediation, project management, personal values, and civic leadership. I processed the data and had to tailor it to meet my specific needs.

When I began my individual project, I knew that I wanted it to focus around open communication. My goal was to improve communication at a local institution, which ended up being Dunbar High School.

I was not sure how strong the communication was between the students and the administration, but I knew that it is often weak in that environment. Upon asking Dunbar faculty members, I found out that Dunbar has a fairly elaborate communication structure throughout the school. Once I found that out, I began looking for other areas in the school that needed improvement. The school social worker explained that he had several students that were in dire need of a mentor. He went into detail on how these students were on the borderline between graduating and not, and that an hour of help a week could make the difference. I personally did not have an interest in assisting students on a one-on-one basis; besides, my original goal was to assist the entire student body. As an ISTJ, several issues of responsibility crossed my mind. First, I figured that the majority of the students who were failing were not putting forth the effort. Second, I realized that an hour a week was a small amount of time that could make a world of difference. After considering both of my assumptions, I decided that I would have to assume that the students were trying to succeed and just need an extra hand. Therefore, I created a group of UK volunteers that will mentor at Dunbar High once a week.

Does my ELI experience end when the class is over?

Not hardly. I learned a great deal, about myself and others, this semester that is applicable

in the future. I will work to improve communication in all organizations in which I am a member. There is nothing worse than having a group of people, held together by a common interest, which cannot accomplish much because communication between group members is nonexistent.

Once a communication structure is in place, to encourage open communication, I believe that a group is more likely to reach its potential.

After working on a small ELI project, I intend to complete a much larger project. I, along with four fellow UK students, have joined together to create a more inclusive student newspaper. Under the wing of The Leadership Institute, in Washington D.C., we will publish The University Forum in spring 2002. We are currently laying the foundation for this monthly, non-profit publication. The goal of the newspaper is to include all student organizations; even dedicating sections to religious groups and Greek associations. Both Greek and religious affairs are important to a large percentage of UK students-- both of which are largely ignored by the current student publication. By introducing a new student publication to campus, we will create competition for the current monopolized medium on campus. The process of starting a new publication is lengthy; filling out tax forms, soliciting advertising, requesting donations, submitting grant applications, and attracting writers are just a few of the steps that we must complete.

As a business major, I will be able to apply many of the concepts taught in ELI to my future career. Topics such as: leadership and ethics; collaboration and communication; conflict mediation; and civic leadership; are all relevant to the business world.