

## **Shaun Sanders**

When I got accepted into the Emerging Leader Institute I had no idea what I was getting involved in. So many different thoughts ran through my mind about what the class was going to be like, and I really just had no clue as to what the class was actually going to be like. I thought it might be a really professional class, one where "casual dressy" was required (yeah right). One of my other biggest fears was that the class was going to be where we just had guest lecturers come in and talk at us, which was also far from reality. I never felt talked at or fed information, I always felt like the guests were talking to us and that is one of the things that I really liked about the class. You get so much more out of an education if you have to participate, instead of it just becoming words on paper. By involving us and talking to us it made us or me at least feel more a part of the class, instead of just listening to some stranger talk for two hours.

One of the main reasons I took the class was because I am a Business Management major and I wanted to learn some more about leadership and management. I thought there was going to be more on how to be a good manager and the details of it, but this is because I had a misconception about leadership. I learned real fast that management and leadership are not the same thing, and never before had I distinguished the two. Management is being able to give orders and making sure a job gets done. Leadership, I believe is being able to motivate people in a positive way so that they can become leaders too.

During the course of the semester I believe I truly learned not only how to be a good leader but I believe the class also taught me how to be a better person. At the beginning of ELI I was going through a lot in my personal life, and I was struggling with

the idea of considering myself a leader. During this time I gained an immense respect for not only leaders but also adults as a whole. It was the first time in my life that I had to deal with serious personal problems and still try to maintain my grades and really at times it was hard to get out of bed, and some adults have to do that everyday, plus take care of kids, and many other jobs. I think it was a blessing that I was in ELI when I went through this time in my life because I was getting the actual experience to go along with the class. I mean I seriously had to look deep to find the strength to even lead myself. Without ELI, I would have panicked and probably just tried to keep my problems to myself, but one of the things I learned was you have to know when to ask for help.

Although my project is not complete, I have learned many things so far about planning a project and that phase of it. I learned that in the very beginning it is not good to just pick one number and call, but you should call many numbers and then decide the best place to do your project, whatever it may be. My project is not a big or world-changing project, I simply want to mentor a boy from a single mother home and at the same time teach him to read. I believe that by doing this I will hopefully at least change two people, the boy and myself. Right now my project is still not off the ground. I am going through the last technical things like background checks and filling out paperwork, and hopefully the background check will come back soon and I can begin working with the boy. From my project I hope to gain a close relationship with a boy and I want him to feel the same way.

After ELI and my personal project is over I want to continue to explore the different ways of volunteering and making a difference in the world. I really want to do something with animals in the future, even if it is just taking them for walks or something

as small as that. Also, I would like to take all the qualities I have learned in ELI and try to become a better person everyday. I want to be totally open to every idea that is thrown at me and try to live my life to the fullest without any regrets. It is funny, but I think that is the most important thing I have learned from ELI, to live in a way that makes me happy, and not to be afraid to take risks.

Overall I would say ELI was a great experience for me, the best I have had so far in college. The people that I have met and the lessons on life as well as leadership I will never forget. Thank you for the opportunity...