

Wanda Davis

As we go through life, all of us are faced with challenges that force us to explore our personal capabilities, self-awareness, and self worth. Additionally, everyone wants to make even a small difference and to be accountable as a responsible citizen.

Being selected to participate in the Emerging Leadership Institute for the fall 2001 semester has proven to be such a challenge for me both personally and professionally. Having the opportunity to be a student in this class has allowed me to accomplish some personal goals as well as to contribute to the community within a group while going through the processes.

The MBTI personality type module at the beginning of class helped me to identify and act on my strengths and weaknesses. Even though I have always been very conscious of whom I am and what my capabilities are, these sessions were the tool needed to help me further discover myself as a person and fellow citizen. Recognizing my own personal qualities now enables me to be able to communicate more effectively with others and to be more tolerable of others' differences.

The Life Management and Goal Setting module was very instrumental in assisting me in becoming more focused on my individual project by demonstrating how to set priorities and to complete tasks once implemented. Being of the INFJ personality type, I always had a tremendous desire to be of service to others while rewarding myself with the satisfaction of having done something good for someone or some cause. However, I often allowed my passion for involvement for social change and my do-good attitude get me involved with more projects than one person could normally handle. These sessions became a learning experience for me to improve methods of setting attainable goals

rather than setting unreasonable goals that could not be successfully completed. I particularly enjoyed creating a personal mission statement for myself and intertwining that into my objectives for this class. By following the goals set in my mission performance plan, I was able to accomplish my goals and also enjoy myself in the process. This session was of great interest to me because one of my principal learning objectives for this class was to improve personal weaknesses and enhance certain strengths. Learning to set priorities allowed me to be more productive and to effectively complete my individual project which was to implement a voters' registration drive on a small scale.

During the weeks of involvement in my individual project, I learned to manage my time more efficiently and to become more organized by keeping journal notes and keeping weekly schedules on a calendar as suggested by the student and staff mentors. Also, having both a student and staff mentor was beneficial because it gave me two different perspectives as to what the expectations were and gave me access to constructive criticism from others who had knowledge of how to successfully complete my goals.

The weekly meetings were excellent in helping each peer member stay focused on each individual's goals by utilizing each meeting to communicate to each other what we were doing and how we were progressing on the projects. Also, this gave us the opportunity to develop our interpersonal skills while getting to know the other peer members more personally.

All of the class interactive exercises were fun as well as useful in helping me to identify my own and others personality traits. In identifying and acknowledging my own

and other individuals' qualities, I received a great magnitude of personal growth in learning how to appreciate and respect others' opinions and ideas different from my own. I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity in a positive class setting to be able to express my own ideas and to discover that my opinion matters even if it is different or far-out. The tone of all the class activities enabled me to feel comfortable in being able to practice my interaction and communication skills in a relaxed environment.

Words cannot express how much knowledge and wisdom I gained from the guest speakers and facilitators that presented such profound information from their life's experiences and professional careers. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to be in the company of such successful leaders that had taken the time out of their busy schedules to share their experiences and wisdom with others. For example, I will never forget Mr. Wendell Ford's advice that in order to be an effective and successful leader, one must have the personality and good communication skills as well as have the commitment to want to make a difference. That advice I hope to carry with me for the rest of my life to continue to become a productive and contributing citizen.

In closing, I would like to relay how enjoyable and rewarding the experience of volunteering at the Salvation Army was for me. I enjoyed helping to hand out the food to the hungry for the Feed the Hungry Program especially because it gave me the opportunity to be of service of those less fortunate and at the same time fulfill another performance task of being of more service to others in the community. This task satisfied my need to feel good that I helped someone for the day and to accomplish another learning objective of assisting in tasks and goals set by our class group.

Overall, this class has been the most rewarding class for me at the University of Kentucky, and one which will remain with me throughout the rest of my life because for once—I set goals, accomplished my goals, learned from my experiences, and had lots of fun while pursuing these goals. My self-worth has been enhanced so that I can now say that I made a difference and discovered my purpose for living.