

Emerging Leadership Institute

Fall 2003

During my senior year in high school, I struggled to decide which college I would attend. My two top choices were the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville. After I visited both of these universities the choice was clear; although, both schools are very good, I felt as though UK would offer more opportunities to be involved and bring forth my full potential. The main contributor to this decision was the fact that UK offered this program, the emerging leadership institute. It was mentioned in my summer advising conference and I was intrigued so I searched for more information on the program. Once I learned what the program was all about I was very excited and applied for a position in the program. Thankfully, I was accepted into the program; however, I did not receive my notification of it until late in August, so I was worried that I did not get in.

The first few weeks of school, before the class started, I did not have very many opportunities to get involved or meet people. Being a freshman, I didn't know when any clubs or organizations met, or anyone to contact to get information. Doing nothing the first few weeks was very hard for me since I was used to doing everything in high school. I was so excited the first Saturday when we all met. Like Justin said in his presentation, it kind of felt like high school again after we got to know each other. And that was a good feeling for me; it made me feel comfortable because that is all I had known for the past four years. As time went on I think we all felt more comfortable around each other

and, like Rhonda said, felt as though it was a safe place to be open and talk with each other.

All throughout high school I was a leader. Not only because of my own initiatives and capabilities, but because of people who mentored me and help me grow as a person and as a leader. This is what I viewed my Eli experience to be before the class actually started. Already being a leader, I thought that this class would assist me in honing my own strengths and developing my weaknesses into useful tools in my leadership endeavors. However, I don't mean to sound disappointed when I say this but, it didn't effect me like I thought it would at all. This is by no means a bad thing though. While I was looking for the class to effect me to where I would develop my own leadership qualities; it effected me more in an indirect way. What I learned in Eli was not about myself, but about other people.

If you will remember during my presentation I stated that I honestly have not gotten anything from this class so far, but I believed that it was one of those things that you actually learn something by looking back on it. Well, now that I have taken time to reflect upon my experiences in ELI, I have realized that through this program I have learned so much about the different ways people go about leading others. I am a very observant person; even when I seem like I'm not, I'm really just playing dumb. Now looking back, I see that I was observing others more than I was myself. That is a good thing because I have all of my life to observe myself, but we should cherish the time we spend with others and learn the most we can from them. That should be in a quote book, ha-ha. Anyways...sorry I think I have ADD.

The first session with Rhonda was very enjoyable for me. Rhonda did a very good job presenting and the material we covered was very interesting to me. It was something I had never done before, and I really wasn't aware that there were that many types of leaders. The great thing about it was that we had somebody from every category in our class, and a lot of people had different combinations of high and low leadership qualities. This is probably the class that I learned the most in; not only about myself, but about others as well. It was neat to see which people in the class you paired up with and which people were completely opposite of you. This class also helped many people, as well as myself, be aware of their weaknesses and what they can do to develop those into strengths.

Coming from a smaller town I have never really worked with anyone very different from myself. Also one of the main things I had to learn to deal with was what some of the leaders did on the weekend. Please don't take this the wrong way, I am not trying to bash anybody here or condemn alcohol. Honestly, all the students at my school who drank were considered hicks and, for lack of a better word, losers. They were the kids that no one expected anything out of and it was assumed that they would never do much with their lives. I didn't even realize how much of a stereotype that was till this program. It really threw me for a loop when I came to terms with people who drank being in leadership positions. It is still hard for me to see corporate CEO's or presidents of organizations going out and getting wasted on the weekend. I just don't see how that can be healthy for anyone in a leadership position. But as I said before I am trying very hard to get out of my comfort zone and accept the things that people do and not allow that to sway my view of them.

I suppose this can connect with Lance's lecture. Lance told us that there are three circles. The inner circle is our comfort zone, the middle circle is uncomfortable, and the outer circle is where we shutdown. Lance explained to us that when we are in our comfort zone we don't learn anything because we are satisfied. When we are in the middle circle, the uncomfortable spot, we learn the most because we are not satisfied, but we are not totally miserable. In the third circle we shutdown because we are so miserable and are not able to do anything productive so we are useless. This definitely applies to my experience with ELI. Most of the time I have been in the middle circle; trying to learn as much as I can about others and their leadership qualities and how I can apply them to my own life. Every now and then I would go back to the inner circle, my comfort zone, just because I was lazy and didn't feel like doing anything that day. I know, that's a horrible thing. And very seldom did I go into my third circle where I just completely shut down. I believe I slipped into the third circle in maybe two classes. When we went to the rehab center, for a while I was in my third circle. This wasn't because I didn't like the project, it was because the people I was trying to work with would not respond and I became very frustrated. Then Rhonda came around clapping and told everybody to start dancing, and I don't know why but that bumped me back down into my middle circle. So thanks Rhonda!

Another class I really enjoyed was the ethics class led by Lee Edgerton. Ethics and morality are two things that I take very seriously and I am always searching for ways to learn more about them. Since I am interested in ethics and was intrigued by the discussions and thoughts Lee had, I enjoyed the class tremendously. It was interesting to see how others in the group reacted to some of the scenarios that Lee suggested. When

he asked if it would be wrong if Lauren ran a stop light in the middle of the night when no one was watching, some people thought it would be wrong and some people thought that it wouldn't. The argument that it wouldn't be wrong was that if no one knows then no one cares, and that you're not hurting anybody by running the light since no one is around. The argument that it would be wrong was that it is the law to obey traffic lights regardless of what time it is or the conditions. It is interesting to see why some people reacted like they did, whether it be because of their past or because of some other experiences they have had.

Probably one of the most unproductive things I have done all semester is work on my service project. This is not because I was lazy, but because of certain circumstances it would only work out if I did my project next semester in the spring. When I finally did decide on what I wanted to do for my project, a puppet festival, I knew I could use the help of my friends in Ohio. So I called them and explained to them what I was thinking about doing and they all said they would love to help. The only problem was that they were going to Jamaica this Christmas to perform puppets and do other mission work. So they didn't have anytime to plan or prepare for my project before the spring. However, I think this worked out very well because I was planning on holding the event at Immanuel Baptist, and when talking to some people at the church I was informed that I would need to attend the church for a while and get involved so people would get to know me. I totally understood this too, I wouldn't want some total stranger holding a big event in my church. So I think throughout these last few months I have proven myself to be a well-mannered, trustworthy young man, and many people at the church would now feel comfortable with me holding an event at the church. As of now I have all the general

ideas of everything I want to do established, all I need to do now is develop the details and put my plans into action.

It is an honor and a privilege to be associated with this institution of leaders. I honestly believe that ten years down the road I will see the people in this class on magazine covers and the news. I hope this institution is always changing for the better and trying to make great leaders out of good leaders. Thank you so very much for the opportunity to be part of something great. May God always bless this institution and its leaders.