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Final Paper

“Nothing in the world will take the place of persistence” Calvin Coolidge from Press On. This poem was given to our Emerging Leader class by President Lee Todd. My Emerging Leaders Institute class started on a Saturday, just like any other Saturday, but what I didn’t realize at that time is that this class would teach me things you can’t learn from a book and lessons that would last a lifetime. I didn’t realize that this class would be a learning experience I would never forget.

When the semester first started I defiantly didn’t think I could change how things were here at the University of Kentucky and defiantly not in Lexington. Coming into the class, I really had no idea what I was getting into. I walked in the first day feeling very small as if I was not a good enough leader to be in this class. I felt like my past leadership roles were insignificant compared to everyone else. But over the course of the semester my ideas about my own leadership abilities changed and I became more confident and knowledgeable about what it takes to be a good leader.

The first class started with a ‘get to know you’ session, that introduced everyone in the class and spelled out what the course would consist of. After that class, I had a good feeling that this was going to be a lot more than three credit hours towards a diploma. From that day on, each class session had speakers come in and talk about different subjects that we would encounter as leaders. These talks ranged from our types of leadership to conflict mediation to ethics in leadership. Although they seemed very

different they had a common goal which was to help us grow as leaders. Something that stood out to me was the ethical discussion. It brought up good points about ethical decisions, that we might have to make, as we came into leadership roles. We brought up the point that what you do as a leader can effect how people see you. In class, we used the example that you should never do something that you wouldn't want printed on the front page of the newspaper.

When the topic of our individual projects came up, I had no idea what I was going to do. I remember Rhonda Strouse saying that this project would be what we made of it and that we might put in more work for it than we do for all of our other classes. However, if our project was something that we were passionate about then we wouldn't mind putting in the time and work to make it happen. How true this was. I remember hearing about our individual project and thinking that I didn't want to take on something that would be a challenge because I might fail at it. When I finally thought of a project I feared it was too big and that I might not accomplish it, but I did it anyway. I found that I truly didn't mind putting in the time to call people or to research my project and I soon found that many other people had this same goal and wanted me to accomplish it. This encouragement gave me the hope that I needed to make this dream a reality. Although it has not happened yet, I have learned that if you have a will to do something, it can be done.

One very important aspects of our class was our mentor groups. These groups meet once a week and at first I was frustrated that it would be one more hour out of my week that I would have to spend in class. But I soon learned that this group kept me accountable for my individual project and gave me some time to reflect on what I had

learned in class. After I picked my project I got excited about going to my mentor group to tell them what I had accomplished and also to hear what everyone else in my group was working on. Having the weekly meetings was also good because if I hadn't work on my project much that week, and we were meeting the next day, I would always try and make some progress so that I had something to tell them. This meeting time was also a support group for me. When I got frustrated with my project the other members were there to help me think of a different approach or someone else to call, to try and get the task at hand accomplished.

One class activity that helped me the most during the semester was the class on our leadership personality. In the DISC activity I was a SIC and this was interesting because there was something from all three of the groups that fit me. I learned a lot about my own leadership qualities but also about other people's qualities. It was great to see our class, who was so different come together so much. Though out the semester we worked together to get our group project organized to helping do the team building exercises on the last day. This unity showed that even though we were so different from one another we were still able to work together to get things done. Through the DISC exercise and the semester learned a lot about myself and about the other people in my class.

One of the other class sessions that stood out to me was on Mindfulness, Creativity and Leadership with Lance Brunner. He had us pair up and have one person close their eyes and have the other person lead them around campus. This exercise was interesting because we had to trust someone else that they would lead us around and not let us fall. Then when we got to something interesting we had to open our eyes and 'see' though the other persons eyes. This was a great activity because as leaders we are always

the ones who want to have our eyes open and lead. It was really hard to trust someone else to lead us. This lesson can be applied to life in so many ways because many times we feel that we must be the ones always leading and never let anyone else help. It also was a good way to see the world from someone else eyes, which is an important thing to do as leaders because often times we only see it our way and never stop to see it from someone else's' view.

I think that my individual project opened a new way for me to look at what leadership is to me. I could start a program that no one else had. One impact that the class had on me was that I got motivated to do something that I loved. I started to see the importance of how to set up a project, all of the different people that I would need to work with in order to accomplish this, and the persistence it would take to make this goal a reality. The different class sessions really helped me see the different ways of handling these situations. In class, I learned some of the ways to handle situations that I would encounter with my individual project. Having my project coincide with the class sessions, not only got me thinking about how I can make my project better but also on how I was going to continue being a leader long after the class was over.

I think it is too early to truly see the effects that this class has had on me. I know that it will be in the future when I really see all of the changes in myself. This class helped me see who I am today. I know that sometime in the future I will look back and be able to see the changes in my leadership style and ability because of this class, even if I don't see them right now. I will take all of the knowledge that I have gained and will apply it to all of the future leadership situations that I will encounter. I feel more confident as a leader and will be more ready to accept the different leadership challenges

that I might face. I feel that this class gave me the option to explore, not only my own leadership style, but the styles of everyone else in our class. This diversity helped me see that although we are different there might be a situation that someone with a different leadership style might handle it better. This in turn brought it back to myself to see how I can handle situations better. One example of this is that I hate confrontation and during our conflict mediation session with Ron Hustedde I didn't want to get involved with the mock situation of a town conflict. But what I learned is that conflict can be resolved if you go about it the right way. Hopefully this realization will help me if and when I am confronted with a conflict where I might have to be the mediator.

Although we went through this class we did not earn the title of a great leader because the classes sessions are over. In everyday life we are leaders whether we know it or not. People look up to us and it is our decision how we handle different situations and what challenges we choose to accept. It is then through these actions we will be classified as great leaders. The title of leader is only a name but a true leader leads through their actions. I think I have come out of this as more receptive to the idea that I can change how things are. That even if I am not a leader by title, I can still lead other people to reach a common goal.