

**Andrea E. Steeves**  
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Without really knowing much about the Emerging Leader Institute, I decided to turn in an application. I am always looking for new things to try and new things to do, so when I heard about ELI, I decided it wouldn't hurt to apply. So, a few months later, I found myself sitting in the Student Center early on a Saturday morning for our ELI orientation, still not really knowing much about ELI. I guess maybe I should have prepared myself a little better, because I definitely was not ready for all that ELI was and all that ELI taught me.

While the articles, presentations, and class discussions were beneficial and instructional, I learned the most about leadership and about myself from my fellow classmates. The first few classes we were all quite reserved and still getting used to each other. But as we got to know each other and become familiar with each other, this is when my learning really began.

ELI is a really neat program because it brings together people of all different backgrounds, with lots of different interests. We all brought our own personalities and experiences to the table, creating an extremely diverse group of people. I would have never met these people if it weren't for ELI. We all know different people, believe different things, and are involved in different organizations. From them, I have learned new ways to get involved and new ways that I can make a difference on campus.

ELI covered topics that I already was familiar with, but always approached them in a different way, so even when I thought I knew it, there was always something new to learn. Before we really even knew each other, we did a ropes course activity. We raced on a ski-like contraption unable to speak and played dodge ball in pairs, with one person blindfolded. While at the time these activities were pretty fun, I also realized that this class would be different from anything else I had done so far at UK. I realized that this class would be a class of doing and putting into practice what we learned, instead of just taking notes and studying for tests.

An interesting concept I learned was the difference between a mission and a vision. In the world of business and politics, I think these words are thrown around interchangeably. I have learned the difference between the two and I now achieve the goals of my vision, by accomplishing the steps laid out in my mission.

Another discussion that I found interesting and beneficial was the discussion on gender and leadership. I always knew that women and men possess different characteristics and therefore, would lead differently. But this lesson taught me that to be a successful leader, one must have the right balance of masculine traits and feminine traits. Leaders must be assertive, but not to the point of hurting feeling and leaders must be goal-oriented, but not to the point of leaving behind people for a plaque or trophy. I have learned to be more assertive and direct when leading because no one will willingly follow a passive leader who you can walk all over.

The DiSC Personal Profile System was also very helpful in helping me identify my leadership style. I learned that I was a Perfectionist and that I am precise, systematic, and I like to follow a procedure. I saw this manifested in my work for my Individual Project. There were steps to follow for setting up a campus organization, and it was easy for me to stay organized and turn in the right papers to the right people at the right time. Knowing how I lead can also help prevent problems in the future. For example, I have learned that Perfectionists tend to overly depend on people, products, and processes that have worked in the past. Knowing this, I will make myself try new things and not rely solely on things that have worked in the past so that I, or the organization I am leading, don't get stuck in a rut, because routine is the enemy of change.

Perhaps the lesson that left the most lasting impression was learning the difference between a successful leader, a good leader, and an effective leader. A successful leader gets the task done and accomplishes the mission. A good leader is one who is humane, one who uplifts and enables, and one who builds up the people and makes them better. An effective leader is both a successful leader and a good leader. Throughout ELI and my work on my Individual Project, I have tried to find the balance between getting things accomplished and uplifting and building up those who are working with me. What is gained if the mission is accomplished, but everyone feels defected and worse for having done the project? I have learned that leadership is not so much about goals met or missions accomplished as it is about people and the relationships built by working together. I am a very goal oriented person, so this has taught me to take

my eyes of the end result and on to the process and the people I am working with.

The greatest aspect of ELI is the emphasis on learning by doing. I have learned so much by working on my Individual Project, starting a Big Brothers/Big Sisters Campus Chapter, and the Group Project, a prom for the residents of Liberty Ridge Assisted Living Center. I got to put into practice all that I had been learning throughout the semester by working on my Individual Project. This process had many ups and downs, but in the end, I am glad that I did it and I am excited to see where it will go in the future.

For a long time, I could not think of anything to do for my individual project. I mistakenly believed that I had to accomplish a huge, revolutionary project that would change the campus forever, but as I started to look around at what needs there were, I realized that what I perceived to be a “little” project can have revolutionary effects. I learned that it is the summation of all these “little” projects that create the greatest and longest lasting results.

I have always been interested in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program, so I contacted them to see what could be done. Imagine my surprise when they asked me to start a campus chapter to help recruit UK students to be Bigs!

I have faced many challenges in this process, but also many successes. I have succeeded in setting up the organization, but it is a challenge to think of new ways to keep this organization different from all the other 300 student organizations in existence.

Putting on a prom for the residents of Liberty Ridge Assisted Living Center was so much fun, that it hardly felt like work. It was fun to see all our planning come together into a successful event that everyone enjoyed. I have never worked with a group of people so motivated and so dedicated to making this a success. People did what they said they would do and nothing was left undone.

At first I was kind of annoyed that my individual project would not be “over” by the end of this semester, but now that all is said and done, I can honestly say I am glad that it is not. While this semester is winding down, and along with it ELI, I feel like my work with Big Brothers/Big Sisters UK is just beginning.

ELI has helped me realized the leadership abilities that are in me and I am excited to put into practice all that I have learned in ELI and to see where it will take me in the future.