

**Emerging Leaders Institute
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The Emerging Leaders Institute is a course that is extremely vague by name. Going into the course emotions are fluctuating, anticipating what is going to be covered and what is going to happen in the semester ahead. Entering the initial orientation is somewhat nerve racking. Especially being the only freshman and trying to relate to the other class members who seem to belong, but as conversation goes on you realize that they are just as apprehensive. As the course breaks in it becomes incredibly evident that everyone in class will become a tight knit group, all the while holding their views and personalities.

For me the course was somewhat of an escape from your everyday life in class. Moving from large classes to a class of 15 was an experience I will cherish. Walking into a room full of strangers with different ideas and different backgrounds makes it difficult to immediately open up and begin discussing why you are and should be considered a leader; yet not discussing why you are a leader but what makes a good one is the entire theme of the course. With designated readings and directed discussions it becomes evident that you have non real idea about what a leader is exactly. The course is meant to challenge what you think at eighteen or nineteen about leadership and then from there allow you to gather all information, resources, and experiences and then begin deciding what leadership is truly.

Valuable lessons are a recurring theme in this course. Bringing in guest speakers and evaluating the lessons they bring is the heartbeat of the semester. I learned many things that I will cherish forever and will apply into my everyday life. Some of the lessons are about setting a clear vision and mission to accomplish that vision to lessons on how to incorporate everyone and exploit their talents by bringing them into the spotlight and using those. These lessons go hand in hand; in my thought process. If one cannot set a clear vision with a group by collaborating with others, then how are those people going to rally around that vision and accomplish anything. Without the direct cooperation of the group and without them seeing the 'finish line' how can you just direct the group? It becomes much easier when the group as a whole sets where they want to go and how they want to be seen down the road by companions. Setting a clear vision leads right into a laying out a direct mission. Laying out that direct mission, demands of you to consider the team you are working with and the skills that each one brings to the table. Placing goals and steps that call upon the specific talents of your teammates allows them to get involved and take ownership of the project being worked on. Also by placing that mission you can check and be sure you are taking the necessary steps to fulfill the vision of the group. Meeting the standards of your mission is going to force you to use your team and their talents. This pulls them into the spotlight and gives them a sense of worth and feeling that what they do is vital to the success of the organization. This breeds a happy environment where everyone feels

comfortable and feels free to place their input in and begin the entire process one more time.

As a leader your primary objective is to do what is right by calling upon your personal values and achieving the goals that have been set in an efficient and effective manner. By using this formula it is simple to meet those standards set by your or your predecessors. This simple fact of vision and mission has rearranged my entire thought process and revitalized my fervor of how I will now go about things. Without the guidance of the mentors and speakers it would have been extremely difficult for me to come upon this discovery.

Mentor groups are a more intimate setting than your regular class. Meeting with three or four of your classmates is an escape from the setting and allows you to express what you really think about topics, speakers, and the book. I enjoyed my mentor group very much; we became pretty close, and after a settling period, were never shy of sharing what we truly thought about anything. Taking advantage of these mentor times was a huge plus for all members involved. This is so because by throwing ideas out about what we were going to do for our individual projects, our group members would give feedback on ideas and different thoughts about what may work and what wouldn't work. Having this board to bounce ideas off of made it much easier for all of us to objectively look at what we were doing to succeed and rearrange it to make it the best it could be.

My individual project was to put together a brochure aimed at high school seniors to get them ready for college and the challenges they will meet there. College is a second world to high school and I believe that high school students are not adequately prepared on what to do to get ready for the leap into college life. While I have not yet finished my project I did get excellent assistance from classmates in taking large bounds in the journal entries and ideas about how to put it together. Thus, furthering my point that you become a pretty tight knit group throughout the course of the semester.

Finally, coming into the final group project; you feel not prepared and not quite sure about how it is going to all come together. Yet, just as usual with the group it all comes together and turns itself into one of those things that you realize that you could never have done on your own but with the group you achieved the goal. This day alone brings the group together in such a way that you will never forget those people and what you did that day.

To sum up everything I learned in the Emerging Leaders Institute, it can be done in one simple phrase, given by Mary Lee Kerr: "Vision is where you want to BE; and Mission is what you DO to get there". This phrase incorporates all that I believe is valuable to a leader. It calls upon communicating with your peers and listening to them. Then it calls upon you utilizing their strengths and pulling them into the spotlight and allowing them to be rewarded in whatever way they enjoy being rewarded. Many people have many different leadership types and I was one who had

ideas myself. I at first thought leadership was being a servant and not asking of anyone to do anything that you wouldn't do yourself. While this is still true it goes so much deeper, and by really thinking about the team you are working with and their strengths you don't just get them to do things you wouldn't do but by setting them up with all their qualities to succeed. It is an excellent set of leadership and incorporating everything and everyone.

This class meant so much to me and like it has been said, is a class that I will actually remember the lessons learned but more than that it is lessons that I will utilize and practice in my everyday leadership experiences.