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ELI – Final Paper

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My Personal Leadership Philosophy

My ELI experience has been very beneficial to me and I will take the lessons that came from ELI around with me for the rest of my life. I now have a greater appreciation and knowledge of what it exactly means to be a leader. I know that the ideas that I learned from ELI will help me in any leadership opportunities that I will have in the future. Some things that came from ELI I already knew and, thus, were reinforced. But, more importantly, I learned many new things that have strengthened my leadership abilities. I now understand that a leader is someone who challenges and motivates a group of people to enact a process of change through a positive example and vision.

Several profound activities really stood out to me during my ELI experience that helped to shape my personal leadership philosophy and strengthened my personal leadership abilities.

To start with, the ropes course that we went through at the beginning of the semester really taught some important leadership principles. The fact that we were not in a classroom setting for most of the class helped me to really gain a specific experience of leadership and followership. At one point, we had to break up in teams and go through a series of activities in order to reach a goal. At another point, all of us had to work together in order to “untie” ourselves from ourselves. Both of these games taught lessons of perseverance, teamwork and communication in an exciting way. We had to stay determined so that we could either win the game, in the first instance, or so that we could accomplish the task and go home, in the next instance. Additionally, we had to rely on others in the team atmosphere to attain the goal. One

person could not merely rely on himself to do everything, because the task would have seemed too daunting and impossible. However, with the help of my classmates, we were able to accomplish the goal. Most importantly, we learned that effective communication is the best and most productive way to complete anything that involves more than one person. Without good communication, every activity that was given to us either would have taken too long or would have resulted in failure. Throughout the semester, we were told that effective communication, teamwork and determination were necessary factors for success, but it is through the actual experience of the ropes course that I was able to really learn these important facets of leadership.

While the ropes class gave us an opportunity to experience several factors of leadership in the field, Dr. Holbein's class on the Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership really stood out as another ELI experience that strengthened my understanding of leadership. In this class, and many others that were similar, we learned that a successful leader must Model the Way, Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Enable Others to Act and Encourage the Heart. In order to model the way, a leader must set a positive example for others to follow. Without this example, no one will want to follow a leader and the leader will not accomplish anything. To inspire a shared vision, a leader must effectively communicate an idea that will motivate his followers to act. Without a specific vision, the leader and the followers will not understand what exactly they intend to do. To challenge the process, a leader must realize that in order to enact change with anything he is going to actually challenge several people and traditions that will hinder him along the way. Also, a leader must challenge his own people to focus and to stay motivated about their task. To enable others to act, the leader cannot be a hindrance to his followers in their activities. If he does this, then the followers will not be able to efficiently do what they desire to do. Finally, to encourage the heart, a leader must realize that he and his

followers will face many hardships and tribulations along the path to their intended goal. Thus, he must intentionally encourage himself and his followers so that they will stay motivated. This ELI class that came directly from the book, *The Leadership Challenge*, allowed me to understand several important factors of leadership that will help me to overcome many obstacles in the future of my leadership skills.

Another thing that stood out during my ELI experience was the two class discussions on gender views in leadership and diversity in leadership. While I did not necessarily change my mind about gender and diversity in leadership because of these classes, I did obtain a greater appreciation of those who were different from me. Of course, I have always believed in fairness and equal rights and that the value of a person should be determined by his or her merits, I did not see certain aspects of leadership and culture from the perspective of minorities and anyone else who may be different from me. I thought that our discussion on culture was one of the best discussions in the ELI class, and it really enabled me to see an entirely different perception from my own. Sometimes, we go through life completely oblivious to the views and opinions of those with a different perspective, and we miss entirely new experiences and knowledge. However, our discussions on race and gender views in leadership presented to me a new knowledge of others that I will take with me for the rest of my life in all of my endeavors. With regards to leadership, I now have greater understanding and appreciation of the differences in our culture that will enable me to see from the perspective of either those who are different from me or those who may disagree with me. I know that this perspective will allow me to be better as a leader and a person.

Most important to me, however, was the class in which we took the leadership aptitude class (DiSC) in order to determine our own personal leadership styles. The DiSC test allowed

me to realize my leadership style is heavily Dominant with traces of Influential. This class was most important to me, because it allowed me to understand more about myself, especially with regards to leadership. At first, I thought that I would not get anything out of another seemingly pointless personality aptitude test. I thought that a test with only twenty-eight questions could not determine anything with any accuracy, much less my own personal leadership style. After completing the test and discovering what the answers meant, I soon realized my leadership style was extremely dominant, which fits well into how I present myself during class. The DiSC test also gave everyone a general knowledge of what each specific leadership style meant, so that we could check with ourselves to see what was correct and what was incorrect. I think that the DiSC test did not necessarily tell anyone anything that they did not already know; rather, it explained, detailed and codified what we already knew about ourselves. This is why the DiSC test was so accurate and informative. My personal style meant that I expect immediate results, I desire an environment that includes power, authority, prestige and challenge and I expect freedom from controls and action. The Dominant leadership style meant that I am very upfront and direct about leadership, and that I enjoy taking authority in order to manage trouble and solve problems. My Profile Pattern indicated that I was the Inspirational Pattern. This confirmed that I attempt to control my environment by initiating, complementing and challenging others to succeed. More importantly, however, I learned that I my possible fears of weak behavior, loss of social status and failure may cause me to become manipulative, quarrelsome or belligerent. I need to learn to listen to others and to care more about the feelings, emotions and concerns of others, instead of always placing the project above the people. All of these ideas came directly from the DiSC aptitude test and confirmed what I already knew about myself, because it was surprisingly correct. I will take the lessons about myself that I learned

from these two DiSC ELI classes with me the rest of my life, because I plan to increase my strengths and strengthen my weaknesses that come from my personal leadership style.

The specific lessons that I learned during my ELI experience have allowed me to understand myself and what it takes to be a successful leader. It is surprising to learn that the factors of leadership that we learned throughout the ELI class are applicable in all circumstances and endeavors. Most of the time, the ELI class gave me a better understanding of leadership. Specifically, the ropes course taught me the lessons of determination, teamwork and communication. Each of these three factors of leadership are necessary in order to effectively and efficiently complete any task. The class that outlined several important and necessary factors of leadership that came from *The Leadership Challenge* book allowed me to understand exactly what it takes to be a successful leader. I plan to use these five specific attributes of a leader in any leadership endeavor that I undertake. Additionally, the lessons and perspective that I gained from the class about cultural and gender differences in leadership allowed me to realize an entirely different world from my own. Obviously, I knew of others that were different from myself, but now I understand how these differences can strengthen and facilitate any leadership task if taken with the proper context. Furthermore, the DiSC leadership aptitude test enabled me to further realize my own leadership style and it allowed me to understand my own weaknesses and strengths. I will use all of the lessons that I learned from my ELI experience in all leadership activities that I plan to take in the future.