

Chris Tooley

ELI Final Paper

Class Reflection

The Emerging Leaders Institute, the title is self-explanatory, it suggests a foundation or focal point where future leaders grow, and obtain the necessary tools to become leaders in the world. Now, the word that comes to mind when I think of what is gained throughout this growth is wisdom. Wisdom is defined as the trait of utilizing or applying knowledge and experience with common sense and insight. After emerging as a leader there must be some accumulation of knowledge and insight throughout each class experience. With this in mind, I will reflect on my experiences and tap into the knowledge I received while in the Emerging Leaders Institute, ELI. I will discuss what I did in Emerging Leaders that stood out to me. I plan to also focus on the impact the lessons had on me, and what I learned from the process. I will also highlight what I will do with this new experience and how it has made me different. In a sense I'll outline where I go from this point on.

Throughout this experience there have been a number of new concepts, terms, and ways of viewing leadership that continue to cause me to remember or feel inspired. These moments stand out in my mind as turning points where I learned something that cause a change within me and forced me to allow that change to show on the outside. One of the first things that stood out to me actually took place the very first time we met, during the opening ceremony. The activity that always comes to my mind was called "This is My House." This is where we designed a house on giant white paper with

markers, but this was no ordinary house. The house consisted of a number of different elements that had to deal with who we are and what makes us who we are. The foundation of the house represented the concepts or values with which we live our lives. The walls represented the kinds of things we do to strengthen and support the concepts and values in our foundation. The windows represented what we are most proud of and what we want others to see. The door represented the important parts of who we are that we have borrowed from someone else and who that someone is. The roof stood as the protective mechanisms for ourselves. The smoke stack was intended to represent the forms of release we commonly use, or how we let off steam. I truly enjoyed this exercise and all of its components because of the symbolic nature of a house being your home, and how it revealed who each person really was behind closed doors. It was the first time I was able to truly invest a piece of myself into an assignment I was doing for class.

Another activity that stood out to me was the work we did with the Refugee Ministries for our group community service project. This project focused around finding some way to help the people that are under the umbrella of the Refugee Ministry and receive aid through them. Since there were a lot of families from all over the world with the Ministry we decided to put together a giant get-together for all of the people of the different families. We served food, we had games for all the kids to play, we had door prizes, and we took pictures at the very end. The event was very memorable to me because of how all the different people from different cultures, countries, and religious backgrounds came together and enjoyed each other's company. I had the chance to play soccer with kids from Liberia and pass the ball around with kids from Turkey. One of the moments that really comes to my mind when I think of that experience is when I was

playing with the soccer ball, and kicked it toward one of the adult men from Liberia. It was like I was communicating with him through this common sport, without words. As I had kicked the ball to him he kicked it right back to me with the enthusiasm of a child. Then another man joined in and we all continued to play for a while. Just that experience alone showed me how you don't need words to invite someone into your heart and share something special with them. If we could all learn this the issue of diversity wouldn't be as big a problem on this campus as it is now.

These experiences that I have shared have impacted me in ways that I never foresaw before this class occurred. I have heard and been through numerous leadership programs, camps, and center for leadership development, but the topics we touched on through this class had more depth than anything I had heard before. The new knowledge I was given changed the way I view leaders and leadership as a whole. It opened my eyes to the issues of credibility, vision, teamwork, history, and culture that all make up what leadership is today. This process has changed the way I intend to lead in different situations and the way I represent those distinctive qualities that all leaders possess. There is deep meaning behind these new discoveries and how they have effect my leadership skills. As it pertains to envisioning the future, and remaining optimistic about how things will turn out, these lessons have been essential in forging a new prospective on seeing the bigger picture and being a risk-taker in my mind. The impact of working with fifteen other individuals who are leaders in their communities has helped me to understand where I fit in among this university's rising stars. I have learned that if you don't ask no one can ever say yes. So, in essence you must be strong in your conviction and never be afraid to go out on a limb because that's where the best fruit is.

A friend once told me that anyone can stay a float because the ocean never stays still. This applies to leaders because this experience has taught me that leaders are resilient and they are the ones that except the risk of possible failure and shoulder the blame. This process has opened my eyes to the different leadership styles that exist in the realm of leadership. Those four styles are dominant, influencer, complier, and steady. The dominant individual takes charge, gets down to business, and focuses on deadlines. The influencer visualizes the big picture, turns work into play, and imagines possibilities. The complier plans carefully, analyzes relevant data, and imposes logic and structure. The steady individual creates a comfortable environment, follows procedures that are tried and true, and establishes an easy work pace. I learned that I am in between the dominant and influencer leadership styles, and I tend to lean in either direction at different times. This acquired knowledge showed me there are better ways to lead in certain situations. It also showed me the importance of having a team full of diverse individuals with different leadership styles. If there are two dominant people in a group they might compete with one another for dominance in the group. This exercise helped me learn what I have to improve upon as a leader and where I fit in the grand scheme of things.

Now comes the tough part, the application of this knowledge and experience toward future events. The question is what will I do because I have experienced this? One thing I will do is apply the new and improved skills that I have obtained to the new situations that arise in my life. From this point on I must continue to make the ideas of leadership that I was taught throughout this experience remain embedded in my actions and my speech. I must continue to remind myself that leadership is simply defined as the

process of creating change. With this experience I must become apart of that change within my community and on this campus. I will focus my attention on applying this new found wisdom to make myself and my peers' better leaders. I must take on new challenges with a new outlook on how things will turn out, and confront them with these learned styles of leadership. I personally feel that leadership is the ability to create change, while instruct and guiding other individuals in a manner that motivates and inspires them to accomplish more. This has become my new philosophy on leadership combined all my experiences that I have gained throughout this process. The places I go from here are still unknown, but they will reveal themselves to me in due time. When that time comes I will make sure I remain focused on affecting changed wherever I am. I feel as though I have made a change within myself, making me a different person than I was before.

The way that I approach new situations and view my success has changed. I have realized that it is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils in life, meaning all those things that prevent you from living out your full potential. My ambition to better myself everyday and to continue to achieve more has gained more fuel for the fire. I have been metamorphosis and have evolved into a new leader with a fresh outlook on how to approach those same age old questions of how to lead. I have been inspired through a shared vision by all those involved with the Emerging Leaders Institute. I make it my mission to continue on an acclivity toward excellence and to continue to grow as a leader. I have realized that excellence is not something you attained, but a journey you continue to travel on throughout your life. I am thankful to all those who spoke

during each session for sharing their knowledge. I plan to take the knowledge I have received everywhere I go.