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ELI: Final Paper

### **ELI FINAL PAPER**

Coming into the ELI class, I had no idea what to expect. All I knew was that this class was a leadership class, and had hoped it would further my leadership skills and help define myself as a leader. With almost every class I take, I find myself becoming bored and often forget the things that I learn. This was not the case for ELI. Even though it is dreadfully a two hour class, and class speakers are not always entertaining, I actually enjoyed coming to ELI every Tuesday and Thursday. I came into ELI with an open mind. I was willing to learn and ready to show people my leadership qualities as well as seeing others. What I learned in ELI, I will never forget.

When the class started it was a little uncomfortable at first. Right a way we had to give out information about ourselves and express our opinions. I guess this was a way for everyone in the class to get to know each other and be brought out of their comfort zones. In this situation we were already learning one aspect of leadership: stepping out of your comfort zone. I have always thought that I have a busy life, keep myself involved, and take on leadership opportunities. After hearing my fellow classmates share things about themselves, I soon found that some of them were way more involved than me. However, this was great for me because I began to get information about other organizations and felt inspired by my classmates.

When I first found out that we were going to have to do an individual and group project, I was not very excited about it. However, after a couple of weeks of class I realized the meaning behind these projects and the potential they had to add to my leadership skills. Our class had difficulty deciding on a group project because there were

so many organizations where we sought really needed help. However, we came to a consensus on the UK Refugee Center. As we assigned committees and worked together really well, the project came together nicely and was a big success. I was intrigued by our decision because this allowed me the chance to work with an organization that involved diversity, which is not something I have been involved with much. After working with the Refugee Center, I am inspired to work with more diverse organizations and help those in need. Together, both projects have helped mold me into a leader, and one that is willing to make change at UK.

I am supposed to write in this paper what I learned. I do not think I could even begin to list or write about all the things I learned in this class because it is just too much. I have gotten more out of my ELI experience than any other class I have taken in my college years or even my life. This class has given me so many opportunities and so many challenges that I want to pursue. All the leadership qualities I possess and all the qualities I am willing to improve on, I have learned from this class. This class has also made me realize the abilities I have to inspire and motivate others.

There are some speakers I enjoyed and there are others I disliked. One speaker that really stood out to me was Winn Stephens. He spoke to our class about diversity and leadership. There was something about him. He was so happy-go-lucky and so outspoken that it really caught my attention. I think the fact that he was a Packer fan also helped! However, by playing a game, he made each of us realize that we are culturally different and diverse in each of our own ways and that we apply those attributes to ourselves as leaders. Another one of my favorite speakers was Dr. Gordon Holbein. He spoke to our class about the five practices of exemplary leadership and I will never forget

his quote, "If you don't ask, they can't say yes." This quote applied to a game we played in class where we were divided into groups and we had to get peoples signatures.

Whichever team received the most signatures won. Maybe I liked this speaker because my group won! Actually I will never forget his quote and will apply it to myself as a leader. Often as leaders we need things and we need help, and if you don't ask someone for help they can't say yes.

One activity that stood out to me was the ropes course we did on our second day of class. The ropes course really brought out the qualities of teamwork and communication as a part of leadership. We played a game where we put ourselves into a knot and then had to find a way to get out of it without letting go of each others hands. This was a very difficult task and could not be accomplished if every one was talking at once. This activity also gave me the chance to bond more with my fellow classmates. Activities like these are a part of what makes ELI a fun and interesting class.

I think the most important part of ELI was the bond and friends I made with all my peers. The students of ELI are future leaders and they are the fellow classmates I will be and currently am working with to make a difference at UK and in our community. I have become very close with all the students in my class and not only see them for fours a week but also outside of class. I think our class has formed a close bond and will greatly miss seeing each others faces every Tuesday and Thursday.

I hope that my peers and I continue our friendships and work together to solve problems presented to us. I know these are the people I am going to turn to for help, connections, and ideas. I think that because of our common experience of ELI we will make the most out of our college experience and continue to motivate and influence

others. Even if I do not remember everything about ELI, I will remember our debate on ethnicity “Hispanic”, and how Angel got us into a heated argument. Also how could I ever forget the day we set off the fire alarm because of burnt popcorn at our group project. It was exciting to stand outside of Good Barn and wait for the fire department to come. We can blame this little incident on Blake! Although we burnt the popcorn, I will never forget all the smiles we put on the faces of the people at the Refugee Center. The pictures we have of that day will keep the memory alive.

My ELI experience has made me want to pursue other leadership opportunities and join other organizations. Currently I am becoming involved with Relay for Life and Dance Blue. I also hope to hold a leadership position in my sorority next year. I not only want to become involved in these organizations but want to take on leadership positions within these organizations. I always want others to make change but now I can make the change myself.

Throughout the semester the class took several self assessments about different leaderships styles. I found out that I have a dominant leadership style and was quite strong in this area. This doesn't surprise me because it fits me perfectly. However, what I did learn was the down sides of being a dominant leader. I learned that I do get the job done. However, I also learned that I need to be more patient and listen to others ideas. It was nice learning things about yourself because then you can apply the qualities you want to improve on with projects you start or organizations you are involved in.

They call ELI the Emerging Leader Institute because we are emerging leaders. I do not think that I am a complete leader, but I think I am on my way. I hope one day to become a physical therapist and help those in my community. Not only do I want a

career but I want to become involved with organizations within my community because that is truly how you can make a difference. I think my ELI experience has steered me on the right track.

I think now as I approach the end of ELI, there is only one option left for me. I need to allow myself to lead others and inspire others to lead themselves. So many times I see things and I read about things and I think to myself, “Why isn’t anyone doing anything about this?” This kind of relates to one of my classmates Bert. At the beginning of each class we are suppose to share any leadership observations we have seen. Many times Bert will bring up something that needs leadership. He asks about our opinion on the subject and then asks what we think should be done. This really intrigues me because he is the kind of person that really seeks change and that just inspires me. Now, instead of asking myself why someone is not making change, I will take the initiative to make the change myself. Our class definition for leadership was: The process of creating change through an inspired vision in which motivating others results in a common goal. This definition will always stick with me and be my backbone as I approach leadership opportunities. When I think about leadership, I think of change, motivation, and vision. I think my peers and I will carry on these attributes and continue to make change at the University of Kentucky together.

Last but not least I cannot forget to mention our true leaders throughout this course, Jared Tippets and Angel Lee. These are the people that will help bring out your leadership qualities. They will notify you of leadership opportunities and allow you to express your opinions openly. Jared and Angel will drive you to become better leaders. Good leaders are followers too, and Jared and Angel are good leaders to follow. They

have given me ideas; they have helped me grow as a leader and inspired me. After you have read this I want you to ask yourself a question that I was asked one day in ELI, “Am I becoming the kind of human being who others genially want to follow?”