

ELI

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Final Paper

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The past semester has been a challenging one for me in many different ways. With hardships such as more difficult classes and living in a house full of thirty-nine girls, I did not think I would have a very successful semester. But the Emerging Leader Institute has helped this fall become a better one. By meeting new people, learning about leadership, and mostly by learning about myself, I was able to find a class I could actually look forward to, and also one that change the way I look to the future.

During the course of ELI, there were many different guest speakers and lessons that we were exposed to. Three of these lessons stand out the most in my mind. First, was Dr. Holbein. He came and spoke to our class about the five practices of exemplary leadership. The main point of his message that I remember is his quote, "If you don't ask them, they can't say yes." Dr. Holbein then used this quote to guide an activity at the end of class. He split all of us up into three groups, took us outside, and had the groups compete to see who could get the most people on campus to sign their name by the Patterson Office Tower. We had to go up to strangers walking by and try and convince them to sign a piece of paper. Whichever group had the most signatures by the end was considered the winner.

This activity was a huge challenge for me. I am very conscientious, and so I hate to "bother" other people. Because there was no reward for the signatures, I felt bad

“bothering” random people I did not know. But looking back and while working on my own project, I understand his point. You can’t be a successful leader without being afraid to ask others for their help and input. Communication, even if may be with a stranger, is key.

A second activity in ELI that stood out to me was Rhonda Strouse’s DISC exercises. She had us fill out a highly researched survey that revealed what type of leadership style each of us in the class possessed. I was an “I”, or in other words, an influencer. After we discovered which type of leader we were, we read through the DISC booklet that explained which traits we have and which we lack. This was helpful because it showed me my strengths and weaknesses- what I am good at already and also what I need to improve upon. According to the survey, I am skilled in things like motivating, working in a group, and generating enthusiasm. What I need to work on is learning how to make deadlines and make objective decisions. This activity also opened my eyes to the varying types of leadership. I realized that not everyone leads like I do, and also may not respond well to my type of leadership. So, after this activity I will be able to adapt better to different people in order to be more effective.

The last activity that really stood out to me was the lecture by Dr. Bill Maloney. At first, I really did not like his presentation. I am still not sure whether or not I care for him too much. But, I do think he hit on some very important points when he spoke on “Recognizing Contributions” and ‘Celebrating the Values and Victories.’ During the two days he came to our class, he talked a lot about the weaknesses of our generation. We have trouble communicating and getting others motivated. These are problems that I face in my own organization, and his presentation motivated me and gave ideas to help solve

these problems. Because of him, I realize how important it is for student leaders like myself to stand up and take charge. Our generation needs to prove that we are capable of making a difference in the world.

These three speakers/ activities probably had the most impact on me. But there were also many other days that I will always remember and learned valuable points from. Some of the other memories I bear in mind are running around campus throwing hoola hoops on each other, playing Mafia, taking a “walk of shame” with the peer mentors, making strange noises in a circle with Dr. Brunner, arguing gender differences, etc. Each Tuesday and Thursday holds a unique spot in my mind.

One of the last things we did in ELI that stood out to me was our group leadership project. Each year, the ELI class comes together and organizes an event to hold at the end of the semester. First, in our peer mentor groups, each person was assigned an organization/business to call in order to see if they could use our help for a volunteer opportunity. Many students had trouble getting in touch with the right contact person, but I was lucky enough to speak with the activity director of the Lexington Center for Health and Rehabilitation. She told me we could plan practically anything for the residents of the center- from making crafts to putting on a talent show. Because I was the only person that had actually gotten in contact with my organization, my mentor group picked this rehab center to present to the class.

When we all got together in class, each mentor group presented their idea for the project. Grace Corell’s group idea was chosen by a majority vote. We decided to hold a picnic/family day at Goodbarn Field for members of the Kentucky Refugee Ministry. We

wanted to show the refugees that we welcomed them to our country, while providing good food, music, and fun activities.

All in all, our project was a success. We had many families come and stay for the duration of the scheduled time. There was plenty of food, ranging from pizza to burgers to fish sticks. The kids were excited to play soccer and bingo, and the adults even joined in on the action. And Corey Maple, a fraternity brother of two of the ELI members, did a fantastic job of playing the guitar.

Because this was our first project, we of course had a few problems. Communication with our main helper, Grace, was not as organized as it should have been. Second, we had too much food. If we had known beforehand, we could have used some of the extra money from the pizza to buy more gifts. Third, we set off the fire alarm. Blake left the popcorn maker on and the steam set off the alarm, sending the fire station to Goodbarn. But we laughed it off and ended up taking pictures with the firemen. Last, because of rain, we were a little squished for room when playing games. There were soccer balls flying everywhere because the kids had so much energy. But of course, we all had a good time, and we all learned from the mistakes of our project.

I have gained so much from this entire process. One of the main things that I have noticed is that my definition of leadership has changed. I was looking over my application to ELI, and one of the questions was, "Do you think you are born a leader?" I answered yes. But because of ELI, I have realized that you can learn skills to be a more effective leader. We have been given the tools, ideas, and motivations to better lead others. Also, we have gone through many hands on experiences (our group and

individual projects) that have taught us many valuable lessons. Leadership is an actual process of learning how to guide others, not just a characteristic you are born with.

I have also learned a lot about myself. One thing that I specifically remember is an activity where we had to get other classmates to sign their name next to a quality that they possessed. One of the characteristics was “reserved,” and another ELI member asked me to sign my name next to that word. I have never ever thought of myself as being reserved, and outside of class I don’t think anyone else would considerate me that either. But, I realized that when I am in an unfamiliar setting, I do put out the impression of being quiet and reserved. I learned that as a leader, I need to speak out and be more vocal about my visions. As I said before, I am an “influencer” and have the ability to generate enthusiasm. I need to use these skills I have to be a leader in all aspects of my life, not just my social life.

Last my individual project taught me a lot about myself. I have seen how procrastination can get me in trouble, how important communication and organization are, how to entice others to help me, and how to make important contacts. I have been given the tools to actually create change, and I only hope that I continue to plan projects, and each time learn from my mistakes in order to create change for the future.

Now that I have experienced ELI, I will go on through college and then into my career striving to be a good leader. I was recently elected Secretary of my sorority, and I have been told that I will be given the task of revamping a very important system that we use to organize all of the girls in our sorority. This job will entail motivating others to participate, devising a new point system, creating more authority for directors and coordinators (and then being the liaison between these directors and the rest of exec), and

I am sure many other jobs that I will become aware of next semester when I take the office. I know that after experiencing ELI, I will be more prepared for the challenges that face me in the upcoming year.

In conclusion, I would absolutely recommend this class to other students. Most of my classes have hundreds of people, and I am hardly ever given the chance to participate. But in ELI, we are forced to participate in each class, and we also get to know each other so well. I can honestly say each of the other members are my friends, and their determination and originality in their own projects motivates me to be more involved on campus. I can only hope that I will continue to stay in contact with them for the duration of my college career.

Jared and Angel have also been very inspiring. I completely respect them for their patience, guidance, passion, and knowledge when it comes to showing others how to be leaders. It is wonderful to have teachers who genuinely care about their students. I am very sad to be writing this paper, because I know that ELI has come to an end. When we first started, and sat through the eight-hour orientation, I had no idea what I was getting myself into. But as the semester progressed, I found myself in a truly inspiring class that has given me knowledge that I will actually continue to use for the rest of my life, and I am thankful to have been given this opportunity.