

## **My ELI Experience**

When entering a new class each semester one always has those jitters before class actually starts, but with this class they were even more intense because I had no idea what to expect. Knowing that this class would be much different from the rest of my classes I was both excited and nervous about the experience. I remember the first day of class because I was late and in the wrong building, but once I found the right room it all started to fall into place. From the beginning of the semester ELI became one of my favorite classes because it was so different from my other classes. My ELI experience was centered around not only my furthering knowledge of what leadership really is and a personal analysis of myself and how I can become a more effective leader. From this class the experiences that stood out most to me were the group leadership project and my small mentor group activities.

Throughout the semester the classes were very interesting, but very useful to me as well. With each session I learned a new way of looking at leadership and came to realize just how many dimensions there are to leadership. However, the most important thing I took from each one of these sessions is the motivation to use the things each speaker talked about in my different leadership roles outside the classroom. With each session I would look at how I could use what they taught in my own experience to help my organization. For example, one of the most influential speakers we had was Dr. Holbein who told our class that, "If you don't ask, they can't say yes." This was extremely helpful to me because while I am a very extroverted person I have a

major problem with asking other for help and this quote has stayed with me all semester and really made me a more proactive leader.

While the class sessions were very helpful actually going out there and working on our leadership skills through experience were just as helpful. Our group project was one that I probably never would have had the experience to work with. The Refugee Ministry organization is one that after our project I have gained an enormous amount of respect for and interest in. It is an excellent example of just how much a few people can do with the right resources. They are able to help reestablish entire families in America and having to opportunity to just enjoy an afternoon free of all the stresses they are facing was very enjoyable. However, aside from the enjoyment I got from helping these families the planning and preparation for this day was stressful. With this experience and other I have the tendency to spread myself too thin and I did it again with this experience. I took the position of being in charge of all the finances of the project therefore I not only had to be on one committee, but all three. Although it was challenging to make sure everyone contributed equally to the project it helped me to become more organized with the project. As Grace Gorrell one of the mentors and presenters for the course said, "You have to distribute your monkeys." This might sound silly, but it was very helpful when you are in a leadership role and sometimes have the tendency to want to do everything yourself, that you need to delegate things. I had to give others the opportunity to make their own decisions for the group and in the end many of their choices were better or improvements upon my ideas and made the project much better. With everyone contributing

their part to the project it required great organization by myself and everyone in the class to make sure it all came together in the end. Another great thing I learned from this project is that not everything is going to turn out according to plan. The actual day of the project we had things planned but were unsure what the families wanted to do. So, once the families arrived we had to play everything by ear and roll with set backs and unexpected events such as the fire alarm going off. But, in the end it turned out to be great because all the families were so excited to see the firemen in the uniforms and even took pictures with them. Overall, it was a great learning experience to work on one project with so many people and with such a neat organization.

Another experience I had that really stood out to me from ELI was within my mentor groups when we discussed our own mission statements. This was an exercise that I had never done before. We had discussed mission statements during a class discussion and so within our small group we folded a piece of paper and inside the fold we wrote our mission statement. This statement was something that was short and summarized what we were truly passionate about and inspired us and would never surpass to make us keep trying. After we came up with our own mission statements on the outside of the paper we wrote down our fears and qualities that would keep us from giving everything we had for our mission statement. This was a sort of awakening experience for me because it really required me to take a close look at myself and what really was holding me back from accomplishing what I want. It was a great activity because within the small group we were able to discuss with each other our own mission statements

and then also those things that are holding us back from accomplishing our goals. After our discussion of mission statements on a fears and personal set back we then passed around our own sheets of paper to each member of the mentor group and we wrote encouraging words for each other on the back side to symbolize how we were behind each other in our struggles to achieve our goals. This was a very motivating experience and one I will carry with me, much like the other motivations I have gotten from the class discussions.

ELI has had a lasting impact on me as a student as well as a leader in my organizations. It has given me the motivation to help others achieve their own goals. And as I learned from the DISC day of class I am a motivational leader and I am best at enabling others to act. This is very important because I have definitely developed a different leadership style now that I know this because as I said before I had a tendency to want to do everything myself in a project instead of distributing my monkeys. This created a big change for me when I was in charge of Homecoming for my sorority this year and I had to do an enormous amount of delegating to others, but after I gave them both motivation and direction in which to accomplish their projects everything turned out exceptionally well. And I was able to enjoy the experience more and was less stressed out.

Unlike other classes where you are focused on preparing and knowing everything for a final this class has made me want to learn and remember things to carry on in my everyday life. From the beginning Jared told us this class was different because we will remember for longer than a test what we learned and that is very true. While I might not remember the exact words that were said

during our class sessions the overall impact and ideas of this class will definitely stay with me. I feel as if I have become a more transformational leader in that I am able to share the vision of this class with other and helped them to look at their leadership styles somewhat like I have. With what I have learned in this class I want to help others reach a new potential in their leadership much like this class has done for me both through motivation and sharing some of the ideas that we discussed.

This class has taught me so much through both the speakers we have had and the other students in the class up until the very last day. Kendra another member of our class gave her presentation on her group project on the last day of class and she gave a quote by Ralph Waldo Emerson that once again gave me motivation to create change. The quote was, "Do not go where the path may lead, but go where there is no path and leave a trail." I feel this was a great quote to end our semester on because it was a combination of everything we have learned this semester. Great leaders are those that create change and rarely do people create big changes by following the same path as everyone else. The idea of leaving a trail to those that come after me is a great motivator because not only do I know that I have made a change by creating the trail, but left a new path for someone to diverge from and create greater and better change for those after them.