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Emerging Leader Institute

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## Final Paper

### What I've Learned In ELI

When I applied for the Emerging Leader Institute in August, I wrote in my application essays that leadership consists of two parts; confidence and open-mindedness. While I do think that those two words are important characteristics of what a leader, no longer do I think that those two things are exactly what a leader is. The Emerging Leader Institute has been one of, if not the most rewarding class that I've taken my first semester at the University of Kentucky. Not only has the class taught me what an influential, effective leader is, but the Emerging Leader Institute has also helped me to figure out what kind of leader I am, and will strive to be in the future.

I used to think that being a leader meant just taking charge and being in control of a situation. I'll admit that in high school, most of the students that stuck out as leaders and held leadership positions did just that. Our Emerging Leader Institute class came up with the definition of a leader being, "a leader is somebody who inspires people to make a change- whether that change be positive or not." While I've had a few upper classmen in Student Government argue with me during Freshman Representative Council meetings when they've asked for our definition of a leader, I will stay true to the definition my

class came up with. Just being on campus for the short time that I have, I've had the opportunity to meet some amazing leaders, which are people I would never have classified to be before I took this class. Even in the class itself, in the beginning of the semester knowing what I did, I don't think I would ever have classified the very shy, quiet people to be 'leaders.' Throughout class and learning about different leadership styles and ways leaders can initiate change, I've seen my opinions change drastically and realized that the people who may sit in the back of the room and never once speak up when a question is asked can be the most influential leaders that are going to inspire many changes in their lifetimes.

One thing that hasn't changed with the time span of the semester is the kind of leader I thought I was. Since I was in elementary school even, I have also known that I am a very outgoing person who goes after I want despite anything that gets in my way. When Rhonda L. Strouse gave the DISC test to our class, I was one of the only two completely 'D' people in the room and honestly I wasn't that surprised. While 'D' stands for dominance, I did learn some things about me that I may need to change, or others things that just reiterated the kind of person I am in a different way than I ever thought of it. Some of the 'D' characteristics that I knew existed with me is that fact that 'I know what I want and go after it.' I've always been like that, with school, jobs, and probably even with guys. The test also told me that I am very motivated by results, also very true. I am not a person who likes to sit around and wait for something to happen. My mom always told me when I was little that patience is a virtue, and I don't have it. While she is right, patience is a virtue that I am currently something I'm still working on finding. The DISC test also suggested that I am actively competitive and always 'on the move.' I

think this may be one of the most accurate statements the profile could have said about me. Competition motivates me, and while this can be a very good thing at times, it can also be very bad. Many times I base my own success on whether I win or not and it isn't a good thing. From learning about the kind of leader I am, I've found some qualities in myself that I don't quite admire. I've realized that I need to learn that the success of a project does not need to be about me. 'D' people like situations that can provide personal advancement for themselves and although I may be a person like that right now, I am very much trying to become aware of situations that I want to take responsibility for the entirety of the project, but shouldn't. I am an over-controlling person. It's always my way or the high-way as far as I'm concerned, and I think I've injured relationships with friends in the past because of this. To be more effective as a leader I need to learn how to accept that other people's opinions or ways of doing things may be the better ways. Also, I need to understand that I need people. I think that this statement is true not only leadership wise but also in my personal life. I have the idea in my head that people that are as independent as I would like to think that I am can do everything by themselves. Because of this I don't let other people assist me with projects and tasks the way I should, and also I don't express my emotions to people because I think it will make them see me as vulnerable. Just coming to college and experiencing the things that I have in the three months I've been here has taught me a lot about the person I am. The DISC test also told me the kind of people that I need in my life that will help me with my leadership capabilities. At times I forget to recognize the people that have helped me accomplish something. Having somebody on my team to assist me in recognizing others would be beneficial to whatever I chose to pursue. Also, while I've been at the University of

Kentucky, I have realized that I forget to mention other peoples contributions, and I am now making a conscious effort to due so.

Putting on an individual project was not as easily attainable as I thought it would be. When we were given the assignment in class I originally began to think of things that interested me, and I thought big. My idea for assisting the Central Kentucky Blood Center was, I thought, a great one. The Blood Center needs help, and I thought that I would be the one to do it. Little did I know, the CKBC has an advisory board of college students that have the same passion I do for donating the gift of life and they've already taken it upon themselves to spread the word around campus. As much as I admire what they are doing and the people they are reaching on the University of Kentucky's campus, I think that I was a little bit hurt to realize that my help wasn't needed like I originally thought it would be. I suppose that I could have just jumped in with them on the project that they had already began to plan, and in the future I may do just that, but to me an individual project seemed like something that I should be able to do myself. The beanie baby drive fell into my hands because of an idea that one of my peers gave me. Originally I was just taking this project on because it was something to do? Yet, the more and more I started talking to people and telling them what I was doing, I myself have gotten more excited about I've begun to do. Just a minute ago I had a knock on my door and a girl stopped by to give me some of the beanie babies that she's decided to part with. This project has taught me that even though I thought I would attain my goal myself, I really do need people in order to be successful. Currently I have about sixty or seventy beanies that just sit in my dorm room, and I could just go turn those in and the Lexington Fire Department would be thrilled to receive them, but I feel like there are

more out there to collect. I'm glad that my project turned out the way it did. I've learned about myself along the way and I've also realized that everybody needs help, not just the people that you originally want to give it to.

We've learned in class that there are five staples to the leadership process. One of the many personal profilers that we took in class was to figure out which one suits us the best. Inspiring a shared vision happened to be my strong suit and I would have to agree entirely with the results of the quiz. I've always been a social person and I've never been afraid to approach people to talk to them. Although this has gotten me in a bit of trouble in some situations, more often than not it has proven to be a good thing. From doing work with the Women's Place on campus I think that I've learned that inspiring a vision is one of the things that I do best. Dr. Dorothy Edwards is by far one of the most inspiring people that I've ever had the opportunity to come across in my short lifetime. Her passion for what she does is amazing. I think that even though she gets frustrated with people for not taking her seriously because she's a woman, or because her passion happens to be something that our society likes to look past because it shows that all men are not entirely good, she looks past that and continues to work towards a goal that she's made entirely possible on our campus. I have taken on the position of a peer educator for the Women's Place this year, which has also made me see that my strong suit is inspiring that shared passion that many other women share on this campus. Yes I may challenge the process at times with my liberal viewpoints, or encourage the heart through persuasion, appealing to emotions, or rewarding others for their tasks well done, but inspiring others is something that I know I'm good at.

The Emerging Leader Institute has been a class that I don't think I'll ever forget. Of course we had some speakers that I probably couldn't tell you what they talked about or even what they look, but the lessons that I've learned and the things that I've had the opportunity to learn about myself will probably stick with me for the rest of my life. My future plans have changed since I've started taking the class. I used to want to go into hospital administration, which yes I have the ability to help people, but in all honestly I thought it would be a career that would allow me to live a comfortable lifestyle. Now, for once in my life I don't have a plan. I do know that I want to help women somehow, and whether I make money or not, things I've learned in ELI have helped me realized this. To Jared, Jodee, Dana and Kenton, thank you for a very rewarding semester.