

Andrea Middleton

My ELI Experience

WHAT STOOD OUT TO ME?

The most significant thing that stood out to me concerning the Emerging Leader Institute was the amount of freedom we were given. There are virtually no boundaries to stay within when deciding and working on your individual project. For me this came as quite a shock, considering I am used to very structured course guidelines. This class provided an awesome setting for me to be creative and gain the confidence needed to succeed in *any* task. I also enjoyed hearing the many diverse ideas that my classmates had on leadership.

WHAT DID I LEARN FROM ELI?

I learned a lot about myself by participating in the Institute. I learned that I am completely capable of tackling any project no matter how big or small. I also learned how to appreciate and accept other views on leadership. Personally, I was lacking active leadership roles. For most of my life I assumed the silent leader position by trying to make statements by actions and not voice. However, I feel that the institute has allowed me to gain the confidence to back my actions with words. The leadership sessions provided a more in depth look into the characteristics that successful leaders should strive to achieve. I also learned how to actually work as a class to develop and organize a very rewarding community service project. Doing the class project with no financial support was quite challenging, but this forced me and others to go to local businesses and ask for donations. This allowed me to enhance my communication skills because I had to be not

only confident, but passionate about who we were donating to, and persuasive when requesting the donations.

On a different note, I learned that prioritizing is the key to success. Obviously everything concerning college is important, however, in order to prevail in any task you must divide up your time efficiently. This lesson was most apparent in my individual service project. As stated above, I am used to having strict guidelines to follow. This proved to be quite a problem for me and as a result I placed my project on the priority backburner. Unfortunately, this took away from the total experience that ELI provides, but in the process I learned that when I am given an opportunity like this it should not be taken for granted!

HOW HAVE I CHANGED/GROWN FROM ELI?

I have, without a doubt, grown tremendously from participating in ELI. Not only have I gained a stronger sense of self-confidence, I feel that I have taken a step forward toward a brighter future. By working with others and alone on the projects, I definitely matured. Being responsible for two projects along with the course work from other classes is very challenging. This challenge helped me change my habits from previous semesters--I was always on my toes. I believe that I have also grown as an individual because of ELI. I now, as stated earlier, can be a leader in actions and words. By participating in this class, I now have the desire to seek out other leadership positions and utilize what I have learned from the class.

WHAT I DID AND WHAT I AM PLANNING TO DO

At the beginning I had hoped to work with the American Lung Association. However, this idea did not work out and I was back at square one. I started brainstorming

and came up with the idea to make my new individual project "How to Improve ELI." This topic was not meant to be negative in any way. In fact, I chose this topic in the hopes that the future classes would be even more successful. I began talking to my mentor group and some of my classmates to see how they felt about the course. I also passed out a survey in class to see how everyone felt about my suggestions. Overall, the class appears to agree with my suggestions. Some of my suggestions include making the class two semesters long, condensing some sessions into one day, and including topics on time management and positive thinking strategies.

I am planning to review and formally type up the results of the class evaluations. I will then present these to Elizabeth Bates so that she may decide what areas, if any, should be improved. I then plan to review the current syllabus and with Elizabeth's help, develop a new syllabus for the upcoming year. Hopefully, if any changes are made they will be for the best and the new class will reap the benefits. I really enjoyed participating in the Emerging Leaders Institute and I am certain that the lessons I learned from the course will benefit me throughout my life.