

## Ashley Roberts

### *The Emerging Leader Institute*

*"WHEN YOU CHANGE YOUR THINKING, you change your beliefs; when you change your beliefs, you change your expectations; when you change your expectations, you change your attitude; when you change your attitude, you change your behavior; when you change your behavior, you change your performance; when you change your performance, YOU CHANGE YOUR LIFE." --Author unknown*

My name is Ashley Roberts and I am a freshman at the University of Kentucky. Last semester I had the opportunity to participate in a unique program called the Emerging Leader Institute (ELI). I did not realize what I was getting myself into when I applied for ELI last year, but I soon found out that one positive classroom experience could mold my entire college experience into something more meaningful. This program gave me the tools I needed to begin my own individual project of leadership, as well as an opportunity to participate in a group community service project, and make many important contacts on campus.

#### My ELI Experience

I broadened my understanding of the notion of leadership through the weekly sessions that focused on different aspects of leadership and traits of leaders. One reward that I received from this class which I had not anticipated was being able to meet so many UK faculty members. I cannot stress how beneficial it has been for me to get to know professors from so many different departments on campus.

Through ELI I have come to realize how supportive the students and faculty can be at UK. While I struggled to begin my individual project, my mentor group and faculty advisor assuaged my qualms and encouraged me to "act as if failure were impossible." The supportive atmosphere of my mentor group has been my driving force through out

the course. Thanks to my own hard work and their encouragement I have had a successful semester. It has been really satisfying to see some of my ideas begin to come into reality and to know that all of my hard work is paying off.

Along with working toward some of my own goals, I have also worked toward group goals for our community service project. Our class organized a landscaping project for the Bob W. Brown House for the Handicapped. The project was a huge success and we all had a blast planting flowers and trees to brighten up the residents' home. I learned a valuable lesson about group projects: communication is the key! The class was divided into five groups which were each responsible for a different task. It soon became apparent that the project would not be a success unless each group collaborated with the others to work toward our ultimate goals.

### My Individual Project

I am trying to start a class at the university that will teach students about positive thinking, and how it can change a person's life. This class will teach applicable information that can help students develop a more accurate self-concept. Topics covered will include basics on how the brain works, how to set goals, simple relaxation techniques, how to use creative imagination, and how to eliminate stress, among others. I passionately believe that people can make what they want out of their lives. Despite the negative circumstances that we all face, there are many positive aspects of all our lives. All we have to do to be happy is focus more of our attention on the positive than on the negative. My beliefs in this area are not unfounded. There are many books written on this subject that give factual evidence that the way we think profoundly affects our lives. I am currently working with several UK faculty members to implement my class lesson plans

into several other classes already offered at the university. I am very excited about my progress thus far in my project, and hope to see some of my ideas become reality soon.

### Future Plans

My ultimate goal for my project is to try and motivate more students to realize their full potential and to encourage more involvement on campus. I have become much more involved on campus through ELI. All of the students in ELI are actively involved on campus and in their communities so I have heard about many more organizations and groups on campus which I can join. My college experience at UK has been enhanced by my membership in various organizations because I have met so many interesting people in addition to participating in fun events around campus. To anyone out there looking to get involved or just looking to find your niche, I strongly encourage you to stop by the Student Center and see what's available to you. ELI has shown me what's available and I now feel prepared to explore the opportunities on campus until I find the one for me.