

Liz Peace

My Emerging Leader Institute Experience

When I applied for the Emerging Leader Institute I did not really think it would be much more than something that looks good on my resume. I was wrong. The Institute includes 13 sessions on leadership and requires you to do a big group project and a small individual project. Through the sessions and the projects I not only learned about leadership, but also grew as a person.

When I started the program, I thought that leaders were all alike. I had the idea that if you had a loud voice, good ideas, and people skills then you were a leader. What I did not know is that there are different types of leaders. In the first session we learned what kinds of leaders there are and what types of leaders we were. Through this session, I learned that I was an inspirational leader. This means that I usually have tons of good ideas and love to talk, but I have trouble being task oriented and I am constantly trying to please people. Knowing that I was an inspirational leader was hard for me because I always thought of myself as being a person who was outspoken and did not care what others thought. I never thought I was a big pleaser. However, once I was told this I paid attention to my actions and I found this to be true. I really do try to make sure everyone is happy.

Once I realized this I tried to figure out a way I could fix my problem. I decided that my problem was dealing with conflict management. Luckily for me though, ELI had a whole session on how to deal with conflicts and showed me ways to deal with certain conflicts. Although, I am still working on my problem, ELI pushed me into the right

direction. Also, there are many other sessions that helped me, such as diversity and public speaking.

Other than the sessions, ELI also requires one to do a class project and an individual project. For our class project, we went to the Bob Brown house. The Bob Brown house is a house for the mentally and physically handicapped. At the house we gardened and hung out with the people living there. It was a great experience. I learned not only how to garden (which I knew nothing about), but I also really felt like we helped a worth while cause.

For our individual projects we were not given any outlines on what to do. Our teacher, Elizabeth, sent us out and told us to just do it. As one can imagine, this can cause frustration, but it also built lots of character. I really wanted to do something that I had a passion for. My first thought was kids. Last summer I worked at a kid's camp. At the camp I met many good kids, but one thing was bothering them. Their parents often were hard workers and sometimes the kids seemed to have chips on their shoulders because of this. For me, childhood was a wonderful time. I believe one reason for my good childhood was people were always doing nice things for me, which made me feel loved. I wanted to give this feeling to children, too. For my individual project I went to the Manchester Center and did an Easter egg hunt and played games with them. I also took pictures of them and made a photo album. This activity was a great success. The children really had lots of fun and so did I. I also learned that leaders come in all different sizes. My project might have been on a small scale, but I feel that it was very important.

The last, but not least, thing I got from the Emerging Leader Institute was the people. Through this program, I met so many new and unique people. Everyone in the

class was an interesting person. I feel that the fellow emerging leaders have not only become good friends, but also will be good connections for the future. I get to know people in my sorority very well, but I am many times not acquainted with people outside my sorority. After finishing ELI I know at least one person from almost all of the Greek organizations. However, I did not only meet Greeks, I met many other great people who were in other organizations such as a D.J. at a radio station, someone in an animal rights organization, an agriculture major, a person into acting and many more.

The Emerging Leadership Institute is an unique experience. There were times when I would get frustrated with it. This was because I was learning things about myself that I did not like. ELI revealed my flaws through the sessions and then showed me ways I could improve.