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What comes to mind when you hear the word leader? Martin Luther King, Jr., Adolph Hitler, John F. Kennedy? According to Webster's Dictionary, a leader is "one who leads." After participating in the Emerging Leader Institute, I have learned that a leader is hard to summarize.

At the beginning of this semester, I entered the Emerging Leader Institute with a narrow mind. I thought that I knew the expectations of leadership along with everything that leadership entails. After all, how difficult could it be to persuade others to see your personal opinion and then, get them to follow your dreams? All one needed to do was be passionate about a cause and have good public speaking techniques. Little did I know, there is a lot more to being a leader than meets the eye. By participating in this Institute, I was subjected to various leadership characteristics and practices: time management, conflict management, ethical and moral decision making, valuing diversity, and creative thinking.

From each of these sessions, I learned the most from the conflict management segment. It helped me to realize that no matter how efficient a leader is, there is no way to escape conflict when working with others. I also came to understand that these conflicts can be detrimental to the progress of a group. Thus, the leader must be able to confront these conflicts and deal with them accordingly. It may sound easy, but when dealing with a large group, confronting the dilemma may be harder than it seems. The leader must be sure to take the group dynamics into consideration. It is important to make everyone involved feel that their needs are important. For the project to be a success,

everyone participating must feel as if they are contributing and that they are being valued equally.

On a more personal level, this institute has taught me the value of time management, organization, and confidence. Each of these characteristics was developed through the personal service project that I designed. My personal project was focused on my major, dietetics. I chose to work with pediatric obesity patients at the University of Kentucky Children's Hospital. Lori Hardford, a local dietician, and myself will be holding a five week seminar with these children. During these five weeks we will work to teach the children the importance of good nutrition through hands on activities. The main emphasis will be to teach the obese children the four food groups, balanced meals, portion sizes, and healthy snack options. Then during the fifth week, the group will meet to play a game (similar to trivial pursuit) that reflects on what they have learned the previous four sessions. By planning my individual project, time management was essential. I had to balance my class load with planning the project and meeting with Lori Hardford. It was very difficult to find time when both Lori and I were available to talk. Organization was another obstacle to overcome. Throughout the course of the semester, my project changed three times. Although my project always focused on nutrition, it was difficult to keep together all of the contact information, educational information, and schedules. Finally, I learned how to be confident in my abilities. It is very difficult to be a college student and get anyone in the professional arena to take you seriously. Through my efforts in beginning this personal service project, I learned with a little determination and persistence, it can be done.

Participating in the Emerging Leader Institute has been a highlight in my college career. Through this Institute, I have been introduced to the University of Kentucky's finest faculty and staff, and made friends that will last a lifetime. I have also grown as both a leader and a person. Although it was not always easy to admit my weaknesses, this Institute helped to point out my flaws, and then work toward improving them. It was also helpful to be able to share my strengths and weaknesses with other students who were facing the same experiences. The encouragement that I received throughout the semester from peers, faculty members, and mentors was unbelievable. They helped me to gain confidence in myself and in my goals as a campus leader.

Now, when I'm asked the question, "What is a leader?" my mind becomes flooded with lessons from the Emerging Leader Institute. I have realized that although the majority of stereotypical leaders are famous, fame is not a necessity for leadership. Instead, a leader must possess a vision, be able to share his vision with others, and inspire his followers to take action. As easy as it may sound, there are several other issues that will need to be dealt with along the way. Before my semester in ELI 2000, I was not aware that I really had what it takes to be an efficient leader, but now I am confident in my leadership skills. In fact, ELI has inspired me to join various new leadership positions such as Student Development Council and Student Government Association. The Emerging Leaders Institute has impacted my future not only at the University of Kentucky, but also in whatever path I may choose down the road. I will always remember my experience of the Emerging Leader Institute 2000 as one of the best semesters in my college career.