

## **Elizabeth VanKersen**

Whether it be participating in Derek Lane's activity to demonstrate effective communication skills, learning to appreciate the present through "mindfulness" while meditating with Lance Brunner, or discovering how to master the "art and science of self-management" through Gregory Strouse's timely session- lessons on how to develop oneself into an effective leader are taught through each Emerging Leadership Institute class. Not only are the lessons of how to become better leader taught, but so is the perhaps most important lesson of all- how to emerge as a unique individual. Speaking for the students in my ELI class, I can safely say that more was learned than simply a few pointers on what constitutes a good leader, or what specific guidelines a person should follow to become prominent in his or her organization. Instead, we came to the realizations, that sometimes untaught lessons, of how our own unique personalities, qualities, and skills can attribute to benefit society. There is a "leader" in everyone... it just takes a little support and guidance to maybe make us recognize that fact, which is exactly the Emerging Leadership Institute's purpose- at least in my eyes.

The Emerging Leadership Institute (ELI) is a semester long program designed to assist in enabling students with recognizing their leadership qualities found within themselves or from past experiences, and then apply those qualities to everyday life. By equipping young people with the essential qualities and skills, ones which are often neglected to be nurtured in regular classroom settings, the students and myself were stimulated and motivated for leader type roles. Throughout the semester, to better demonstrate and explain these needed skills and concepts of leading, various individuals were invited to do workshop activities and lecture sessions.

These "various individuals" were professors, counselors, and student activity coordinators who usually specialize in a field that correlates with the leadership class. To better grasp how the class worked, the following example provides a basis for better understanding. On February 20 and the 22, Natalie Cumberlander did two workshop sessions for ELI focusing on appreciating diversity. In those two sessions she touched on the concept of what makes a good leader. I can distinctly recall her telling us that one must be accessible and understanding to each type of person. It is through these sessions that I, as well as the class, was able to better understand exactly what makes up a leader. The instructed ELI classes were not there to simply name off the basics of what constitutes a leader, but more on how I can take concepts and thoughts from the class and apply them to situations in real life. I truly enjoyed all of the sessions, but my favorite parts of the classes were the workshop type activities. In almost each class I participated in a fun activity that demonstrated what the class session's topic was about. The activities that Derek Lane did dealt with demonstrating the importance of good communication and communicative styles. It was awesome because I was taught new ways and ideas which will help me when listening or working with others. Through the different activities I collaborated with other members of the class to solve problems, discover solutions, and share ideas. The underlying meaning of the activities was to give me a hands on experience dealing with other people, and learn how to interact with their communication skills to only then improve my skills.

Another lesson which positively impacted me through participating in the hands on activities was the chance to gain insights into others' perspectives on issues. Through class discussions I was given the opportunity to see how other students looked at

situations that were happening across our university campus. By listening to my fellow student's thoughts and feelings I felt that I was given an advantage, an advantage that would aid me in talking to other people because I will hopefully better appreciate and understand people's perspectives when discussing issues.

The Emerging Leadership Institute taught me not only the aforementioned lessons, but also the awareness that I need to have when realizing that many things cannot be accomplished alone. As one who wants to become a leader, I need to appreciate the help that other people want to offer. It would be impossible to attempt at doing everything by myself as a leader, instead I need to see that any project can become better when more people are added.

By adding more individuals to a project, there will be a greater flow of ideas, greater number of connections to resources, and a greater availability of help. Sometimes I believe it easier to try to complete projects single handedly, when in all actuality it is more efficient and productive to include everyone. I can wield this new realization into a useful tool that will aid in promoting unity and collaboration in any group environment. That entire thought can best be summed up by this unknown person's thought,

"No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude."

After being a part of the ELI course for a semester I plan to take the learned lessons and utilize them each day in any endeavor or leadership type position that I participate in. From the experiences gained in ELI, I have acquired many new skills and abilities, along with discovering new qualities about myself which were before unseen by me. In most university classes that I enroll in, their lessons will not be remembered or

even used, but in the Emerging Leadership class the lessons learned will forever be used whether I be in college, the workforce, or in any other type of people oriented activity. Combining all the sessions that I have attended and the knowledge gained, I surprisingly feel much surer of myself. With ELI's lessons I have seen myself as a more goal oriented person. I agree with Thomas Burton when saying that

**"With ordinary talents and extraordinary perseverance all things are attainable."**

This personal achieving and "discovering of self" could perhaps be due to the students in my class being so incredibly supportive and awesome. It was that everyone was there for each other, and sincerely cared about what was going in each person's life. For some reason, I feel as though all my classmates and I are connected by an indescribable bond which will keep us in touch always, maybe because we are all truly good friends who are there for each other. That perhaps, is the most important lesson learned, the most important piece of knowledge gained, and the most important realization experienced.. one that I will carry with me throughout the rest of my life.